Loya Wamumsewu

Kuchokera ku *The Street Lawyer*, nkhani yolembedwa ndi John Grisham

Womasulira m’Chichewa: LULA PENSULO

Copyright © 2017 Lula Pensulo

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 26061991 11082024

1

Bambo wachikuda ananditsatira pambuyo pamene ndinkalowa m'chikepi. Bamboyo ankamveka fungo la fodya komanso mowa wotchipa. Zovala zake zinkatulutsa fungo losonyeza kuti amakhala moyo wotalikirana ndi sopo. N'kutheka kuti anali munthu wosowa pokhala yemwe anayanjana ndi moyo wokhala mumsewu. Tsitsi komanso ndevu zake zinali zitayamba kuwirira ndi imvi ndipo zinkaoneka kuti zakhala nthawi yaitali zisanaone madzi. Bamboyo anavalanso magalasi adzuwa komanso chijasi chothimbirira chomwe chinkathera m'mawondo.

Bamboyu ankaoneka wonenepa, mwina chifukwa choti anali atavala zovala zonse zimene anali nazo. Chifukwa cha nyengo yoluma ndi kuzizira ya ku Washington, anthu osowa pokhala ngati iyeyu amavala zovala zawo zonse kuti apherere mphepo. Ndipo anthu oterewa sangasiye zovala zawo kunyumba, chifukwa alibe nyumba. Choncho amangozivala n'kumayenda nazo kulikonse kumene akupita.

Zinali zoonekeratu kuti bamboyu sankayenera kupezeka malo amenewa. Chilichonse m'nyumba analowayi chinali chodula. Maloya 400 omwe ankagwira ntchito pakampani yamaloya ya Drake & Sweeney, ankalandira ndalama zankhaninkhani. Ndikudziwa zimenezi chifukwa nanenso ndinkagwira ntchito ngati loya kukampani yomweyi.

Chikepi tinakweracho chinaima pansanjika ya nambala 6. Nditangotuluka m'chikepimo ndinalowera kumanja ndipo nayenso anatuluka n'kumanditsatira. Ndinakankha chitseko n'kulowa m'chipinda chomwe anthu ankachitiramo misonkhano yawo akamakambirana nkhani zofunika.

M'chipindachi munali maloya 8 omwe anakhala mozungulira tebulo. Ndinadabwa kwambiri ndi mmene nkhope zawo zinkaonekera. Onse anali akuyang'ana kumbuyo kwanga moti nanenso ndinaganiza zotembenuka kuti ndione chimene akuyang'ana. Ndinadzidzimuka kwambiri nditaona bambo ndinali naye m'chikepi uja ataima pakhomo. M'manja mwake munali mfuti ndipo mfutiyo inali italoza pa ine.

"Bambo, tatsitsani mfutiyo," anatero loya wina patebulo paja. Dzina la loya ameneyu linali Rafter.

Rafter ankachita zinthu molimba mtima kwambiri akamaimira anthu kukhoti ndipo n'kutheka kuti analinso loya wolimba mtima kwambiri pakampani yonse ya Drake & Sweeney.

Mwadzidzidzi, mfuti inalira ndipo chipolopolo chinabandula siling'i. Zimenezi zitangochitika, maso a Rafter anatuluka m'chimake chifukwa cha mantha ndipo pakamwa pake panatsekeka nthawi yomweyo.

"Iwe bwera udzatseke chitseko," anandilamula bambo uja ndipo ine ndinayenda mwamantha n'kupita kukatseka chitsekocho.

"Aliyense aime motsamira khoma."

Tonse tinachita mogwirizana ndi mawu ake.

Kenako anavula chijasi chothimbirira chija ndipo anachiika patebulo lalikulu komanso lodula lomwe linali pakati pa chipindacho. Atangochotsa chijasicho, tinaona zinthu zinazake zofiira zomwe anazimanga ndi chingwe

m’chiuno mwake. Ndinali ndisanaonepo bomba, koma nditangoona zinthuzo ndinazindikira kuti akhoza kukhala mabomba.

Miyendo yanga inasanduka madzi. Maloya ena ajanso anali akungonjenjemera ndipo ena ankachita phokoso langati agalu amantha.

“Aliyense akhale chete,” anatero bamboyo modekha. Kenako anasolola chingwe chachitali komanso mpeni kuchokera m’thumba la thalauza lake.

“Iwe,” anatero akundiyang’ana. “Amange anzakowo ndi chingwechi mofulumira.”

Atangomva mawuwo, Rafter anasunthira patsogolo.

“Achimwene,” anatero, “Kodi mukufuna chiyani?”

Pamenepo chipolopolo china chinafwamphuka n’kukamenya khoma pafupi ndi khutu la Rafter.

“Pasapezekenso munthu wina wonditchula kuti ‘achimwene,’” anatero bamboyo.

“Chabwino, ndiye mukufuna kuti tizikutchulani kuti ndani?” ndinafunsa monong’ona.

“Muzingonditchula kuti ‘bambo.’”

Ndinamanga maloya 8 aja ndi chingwe chija. M’modzi wa maloyawo, Barry Nuzzo, anali mnzanga. Tinali ndi zaka zofanana, zaka 32, ndiponso tinayamba ntchito pakampani ya Drake & Sweeney patsiku lofanana. Ndi mabanja athu okha amene anali osiyana. Banja lake linkayenda bwino kwambiri, pomwe langa linalibe tsogolo. Iye anali ndi ana atatu, koma ine ndi Claire tinalibe ana. Ndinamuponyera diso Barry ndipo nayenso anandiyang’ana. Ndinazindikira kuti ankaganizira za ana ake.

Posakhalitsa tinamva matayala a galimoto za apolisi panja. Kenako tinamva phokoso lawo pamene ankakhamukira m’nyumbayi.

Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti bambo uja atilozere bomba linali m'chiuno mwake lija.

"Ndikangokoka nthamboyi," anatero, "ndiye kuti tonse ndi chipere."

Kwa kanthawi, tonse tinkangoyang'anizana, azungu 9 komanso bambo wachikudayo.

Ndinakumbukiranso za nkhani zoopsa zomwe sizinkati zapezeka liti m'manyuzipepala, ndikunena nkhani zonena kuti munthu wina wawombera anthu ambirimbiri. Ena ankati akamachokera kulanchi, ankabwerera kuntchito kwawo atatenga mfuti ndipo ankapha aliyense kuofesi kwawo. Anthu ankaphedwa mwachisawawa m'malesitilanti komanso m'malo ena. Ambiri mwa anthu ankaphedwawa anali ana komanso anthu ogwira ntchito zachilungamo, anthu okhulupirika. Sanali atambwali odyera pakamwa ngati ife moti sinali nkhani kutiwombera tonse.

Nthawi inadutsa ikuyenda monyinyirika kwambiri.

"Wadya chiyani lero palanchi?" anandifunsa bambo uja n'kudula bata lomwe linalamulira chipindacho kwa nthawi yaitali.

Bamboyo ankayankhula Chizungu chomveka bwino kwambiri ndipo zikuoneka kuti anali wophunzira ndithu. Zinali zoonekeratu kuti anayamba kukhala m'misewu atakula kale.

"Ndinadya nkhuku ndi saladi," ndinatero mwamantha poyankha funso lija.

"Unali wekha?"

"Ayi, ndinali ndi mnzanga."

"Chakudya munadyacho chinali cha ndalama zingati?"

"30 dolazi."

Bamboyo sanasangalale ndi zimenezi.

"30 dolazi!" anabwereza motero. "Anthu awiri okha

kuwononga ndalama zonsezo? Ukudziwa zimene ine ndadya palanchi?"

"Ayi."

"Ndadya supu basi. Supu wakenso waulere yemwe amagawa kumalo ena othandiza anthu ovutika. Ukudziwa kuti ukhoza kudyetsa anthu mahandiredi ambirimbiri ndi 30 dolazi ukunenayo?"

"Inde, ndikudziwa bambo."

"Itana bwana wako."

Patebulo lija panali telefoni ndipo posakhalitsa ndinakoka chingwe kwa Arthur Jacobs.

Maloya okwanira 800 ankagwira ntchito kukampani ya Drake & Sweeney padziko lonse. Koma tikakamba za ku Washington, Jacobs, yemwe anali ndi zaka 79 ndi amene anali m'modzi wa mapatina (anthu omwe ankawerengeredwa kuti ndiye eni kampaniyi) omwe anali nkhalakhale pakampaniyi. Nditangoimba, Jacobs anayankha nthawi yomweyo.

"Mr. Jacobs?" ndinatero.

"Michael! Zinthu zili bwanji kumeneko?"

"Zili bwino ndithu."

"Kodi chigawengacho chikuti chikufuna chiyani?"

Ndinayankhula ndi bambo uja: "Bambo, kodi mukufuna chiyani?"

"Supu ndi buledi," anatero bamboyo. "Ukanditengere kumalo othandizira anthu ovutika mumsewu wa L Street, nyumba nambala 17. Supu wakumeneko amakhalako wabwino, samangokhuthuliramo madzi ngati mmene amachitira mwinamu."

"Akuti akufuna supu ndi buledi," ndinatero choyankhira cha telefoni ija chili pakamwa.

"Ayi, osati za ine ndekha," anatero bamboyo. "Mukatenge supu ndi buledi za tonse amene tili muno."

“Mr. Jacobs . . .” ndinatero.

“Ndamva kale zimene zimene anena. Zikumvekatu mpaka kuno. Nyumba zomwe zimathandiza anthu osowa pokhala zimalola kutenga chakudya kuti ukadyere kwina.”

“Mr. Jacobs, chonde ingochitani zimene akunenazi. Munthuyutu ali ndi mfuti komanso wavala bomba.”

Ndinaika choyankhira chija pansi.

“Iwe,” anatero bambo uja. Ankayankhula ndi ine. “Dzina lako ndi ndani?”

“Michael Brock.”

“Ndi ndalama zochuluka bwanji zimene unalandira chaka chatha? Osandiuza zabodza, eti?”

Ndinawerengetsera mofulumira ndipo sindinamunamizedi.

“120 sauzande dolazi.”

Sanasangalalenso ndi yankho limeneli.

“Ndi ndalama zingati zimene unapereka kwa osauka?”

“Sindikukumbukira. Mkazi wanga ndi amene amachita zimenezo.”

“Zikomo kwambiri, Mr. Brock.”

Bamboyo analozetsa mfuti ija kwa maloya ena aja m’modzi ndi m’modzi ndipo anafunsa aliyense mafunso anandifunawa. Nate Malamud yemwe anali patina yekhayo m’chipindachi, ankalandira ndalama zoposa 1 miliyoni dolazi.

“Ndalama zoposa 1 miliyoni dolazi?” anatero bambo uja. “Ndimakudziwatu iwe. Umandidutsa nditakhala m’mbali mwa msewu m’mawa uliwonse. Sunayambe wandipatsako kangachepe kuti ndigulire madzi. N’chifukwa chiyani suthandiza anthu ovutika?”

Nate anali wokula thupi ndipo m’mutu mwake monse munali imvi. Iye anali atagwira ntchito ndi kampani ya

Drake and Sweeney kwa zaka 30. Ndi funso limene bamboyo anafunsa, nkhope yake itagwa chifukwa cha manyazi.

“Pepani,” anatero.

“Ndi ndani amene ankayendetsa nkhani yotha-mangitsa anthu m’nyumba yomwe tinkakhala?” anatero bamboyo mwadzidzidzi.

“Ndati ndi ndani?” anabwerezanso.

Palibe anayankha. Tonse sitinkadziwa kuti akutanthauza chiyani. Koma zikuoneka kuti bamboyo sankafuna kumva yankho la funsoli. Maso ake anali pawindo. N’kutheka kuti ankaganizira zinazake. Mwina ankalota. Zikhozanso kutheka kuti ankayang’ana ngati panjapo pali apolisi.

Supu ndi buledi zinaitanitsidwa zija zinafika patatha 30 minitsi. Tinamva kugogoda pakhomo ndipo winawake anakuwa kuti, “Chakudya chija chabwera.”

“Ndikangotsegula chitsekochi n’kuona apolisi ndiwapha,” anatero bamboyo.

Kenako anandilozetsa mfuti m’mutu. Awirife tinayenda pang’onopang’ono mpaka pakhomo paja.

“Tsegula chitsekochi, koma uchitsegule pang’onopang’ono,” anatero bamboyo.

Kunjako kunalibe aliyense. Chakudya chinaitanitsidwacho chinali pansi, pafupi ndi chitseko.

Pamene ndinkatuluka m’chipindacho n’kuwerama kuti nditenge chakudyacho, ndinamva wina akundikuwira.

“Usaweramuke!”

Wapolisi anatuluka muofesi yomwe inali moyang’anizana ndi chipindacho ndipo anawombera bambo uja m’mutu.

Bamboyo anagwera pansi. Nkhope yake inali itasamba magazi. Mbali imodzi ya nkhope yake kunali ku-

libe. Nawonso magalasi adzuwa anavala aja anali atatsala diso limodzi.

Apolisi enanso anabwera chothamanga kuchokera m'maofesi ena.

"Sunavulale paliponse?" anandifunsa m'modzi wa iwo.

Pa nthawiyo sindinkadziwa ngati ndavulala kapena ayi. Komanso sindinkaona. Nkhope yanga yonse inali itasamba magazi komanso zinazake zomwe zoyera zomwe kenako ndinazindikira kuti unali ubongo wa bambo uja.

2

Wapolisi wina ananditsogolera m'chipinda chapansi cha nyumbayo, komwe achibale komanso anthu ena ankadikirira mitima ili m'mwamba atamva zoti tatsekeredwa m'chipinda chija. Pamalowo panalinso madokotala ambirimbiri, koma sindinaonepo mkazi wanga.

Kodi anali ali kuti? Ndinakhala 6 awazi m'chipinda chija ndi chigawenga chamfuti, koma analibe nazo ntchito zoti chandichitikira n'chiyani. Zimenezi zinali zoseketsa kwambiri chifukwa mkazi wanga, Claire, anali dokotala pachitala china chachikulu ku Washington.

Ndinagona patebulo kwa 10 minitsi pamene madokotala ankandiunikaunika kuti aone ngati ndilidi bwinobwino. Kenako sekeletale wanga, Polly, anatulukira. Iye anandikumbatira misozi italengeza m'maso.

"Claire ali kuti?" ndinamufunsa.

"Ndinamuimbira foni. Akuti ali bize."

Polly anazindikira kuti banja lathu lingotsala masanza.

"Uli bwinobwino koma?" anafunsa Polly.

"Ndikuganiza choncho."

"Tiye ndikakusiye kunyumba."

Ndinamvako bwino kuti pa nthawiyi panali munthu yemwe ankandiuza zoti ndichite. Ndikutero chifukwa ndinali nditabalalikiratu.

Tinatuluka m'nyumba ya kampani ya Drake &

Sweeney kudzera pachitseko chakuseri. Galimoto za apolisi zinali ponseponse panjapo. Panalinso maambulasi, galimoto za atolankhani komanso za ozimitsa moto.

"Ndili moyodi eti!" ndinazindikira choonadi chimenechi ndikumwetulira. Ndinayang'ana kumwamba n'kunena kuti, "zikomo." Nditafika kunyumba kwathu ku P street ku Georgetown, ndinapeza kuti Claire sanafike.

Ndinalowa m'nyumba n'kukhala pansi ndipo ndinayamba kuganizira za iye.

Ndinakumana ndi Claire nditangobwera ku Washingtон. Pa nthawiyo ndinali nditangomaliza kumene maphunziro anga payunivesite ya Yale ndipo ndinabwera kudzayamba ntchito pa kampani ya Drake & Sweeney. Mosataya nthawi tinagwa m'chikondi ndipo kenako tinakwatirana.

Koma kampani ya Drake & Sweeney imafuna kuti munthu azigwira ntchito modzipha kwambiri m'chake chake choyamba. Choncho ndinkagwira ntchito kwa 15 awazi patsiku, masiku 6 pa mlungu. Ndinkakhala ndi nthawi yocheza ndi Claire Lamlungu basi, ndipo nthawi zina tinkachitira zinthu limodzi zikakhala kuti sindinatope kwambiri.

Pa zaka 5 zapitazi ndakhala ndikugwira ntchito 200 awazi pamwezi. Zimenezi zikutanthauza kuti patsiku ndimagwira ntchito 8 awazi kwa masiku 6 komanso 2 kapena 3 awazi Lamlungu.

Koma maloya ongoyamba kumene ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney samafunika kumadandaula za nthawi imene amagwira ntchito ndipo ndi munthu m'modzi yekha pa maloya 10 aliwonse amene amagwira ntchito nthawi yaitali n'kufika pokhala patina. Aliyense amafuna atakhala munthu m'modziyo chifukwa zikangotero munthu amayamba kulandira ndalama yoposa 1 miliyoni dolazi pa-

chaka.

Claire sankadandaula ndi nkhani yosapezeka pakhomoyi miyezi yoyambirira. Koma kenako zinamukwana. Iye ankaona kuti sanakwatirane ndi nyumba, ndipo sindimuimba mlandu chifukwa cha zimenezi. Ndikutero chifukwa mabanja osawerengeka ankatha chaka ndi chaka ku Drake & Sweeney. Amuna ankangokhalira kugwira ntchito, 1 awa iliyonse ikumabweretsa malipiro ogwirika zomwe zinkachititsa anthu kuyamba kuona kuti ntchito ndi yofunika kwambiri kuposa kukhala ndi mkazi wankhope yosangalala.

Pamene chaka choyamba chinkatha tili pabanja, Claire anali atasiya kusangalala ndipo nthawi zambiri tinkangokhalira kukangana. Kenako anaganiza zoyamba sukulu ya zaudokotala ndipo ine ndinaona kuti imeneyo ingakhale nzeru kuti apeze chochita m'malo momangondidikirira kunyumba.

Oyendetsa kampani ya Drake & Sweeney ankandiuza kuti ngati nditalimbikira kwambiri ntchito ndikhoza kukhala panita. Ankanena kuti ndikungofunika kulimbikira kwambiri ntchito. Choncho pamene Claire ankachita maphunziro ake, ndinkakhala wotanganidwa kwambiri moti nthawi yoti ndizidziimba mlandu woti wayamba sukulu chifukwa cha ine ndinalibe.

Koma kenako nayenso Claire anayamba kugwira ntchito mpaka usiku. Iye anali atamanga mfundo yakuti akufuna akhale dokotala wodziwika bwino. Posakhalitsa tinayamba kuchita mpikisano wotchedwa "Ndimagwira-ntchito-molimbikira-kwambiri-kupisa-iwe" komanso mpikisano wina wotchedwa "Ntchito-yanga-ndi-yofunika-kwambiri-kuposa-ntchito-yako-chifukwa-ndine-loya."

Ndinali pa timu imodzi ndi abwana anga, Arthur Jacobs. A Jacobs anakhala patina ku Drake & Sweeney ali

ndi zaka 30. Tikaganizira zakazi, anakhala patina ali wamng'ono kwambiri kuposa aliyense ndipo posachedwa akanakhala munthu yemwe wakhala patina kwa nthawi yaitali kwambiri pakampaniyi. Malamulo ndiye anali moyo wake. Akazi atatu omwe anawakwatira banja n'kutha anali umboni wotsimikizira mfundo imeneyi.

Kenako ndinadzidzimuka kutulo. Tulo tinali titanditenga ndipo Claire anali atakhala pampando wina womwe unali pambali panga.

"Unali kuti lero?" ndinamufunsa.

"Kuchipatala."

"Kuchipatala? Ineyo ndi anzanga 8 tinatsekeredwa m'chipinda ndi wamisala wina yemwe anali ndi mfuti kwa maola 6. Ndi mwayi wokhawokha kuti ndili moyo. Mabanja 8 anabwera kudzaona ngati abale awo adakali ndi moyo kapena ayi. Koma nanga bwanji ine? Sekeretale wanga ndi amene wadzandisiya kuno."

"Zinali zosatheka kuti ndibwere."

"Owo! Ayi, zinalidi zosatheka. N'kutheka kuti m'maso mwako ndimangooneka ngati chitsiru."

"Kodi nanunso bwanji? Apolisitu ananena kuti madokotala onse asachoke m'chipatala kufikira zinthu zitakhazikika ku Drake & Sweeney. Ifetu timauzidwa zimenezo nthawi iliyonse imene zigawenga zamfuti zagwira anthu."

"Owo! Ndiye sunaganize ngakhale zoimba foni?"

"Ndinayesa kuimba, koma zikuoneka kuti laini inali bize."

M'mawa wa tsiku lotsatira tinaphika chakudya cham'mawa limodzi. Tinadyera kukhitchini komweko tikuonera ka TV kathu kakang'ono. Nkhani za 6 koloko zinasonyeza zomwe zinachitika ku Drake & Sweeney ndipo anaonetsa bambo uja akuyang'ana panja kudzera pawi-

ndo.

Munkhanizo ananena kuti bomba anavala lija silinali lenileni. Inali mitengo yachabechabe yomwe anaipaka penti yofiira kuti izioneka ngati mabomba. Koma mfuti ija inali yeniyeni. Zikuoneka kuti anachita kuiba penapake.

Dzina la bamboyo linali DeVon Hardy. Anali ndi zaka 45 ndipo anamenya nawo nkhondo ya ku Vietnam. Anamangidwapo maulendo angapo chifukwa cha kuba, koma sikuti anali chigawenga chotha ntchito. Bamboyo analibe pokhala ndipo analibe wachibale aliyense.

Nyuzipepala ya Washington Post inafotokoza zambiri za nkhani imeneyi.

Malinga ndi zimene ananena munthu wina dzina lake Mordecai Green, yemwe anali bwana wa ofesi ya maloya ya 14th Street Law Center, DeVon Hardy anali atangochotsedwa kumene ntchito. Kenako anathamangitsidwa m'nyumba imene ankakhala n'kumakachoma mumsewu.

Iye ankakhala m'chinyumba chinachake chomwe kale chinali chosungiramo zinthu. Zimenezi sizinali zodabwitsa. Anthu ambiri osowa pokhala ankakhala m'nyumba iliyonse yopanda kanthu chifukwa analibe ndalama zoti n'kulipirira nyumba yawoyawo.

DeVon Hardy anali atathamangitsidwa m'nyumbayo chifukwa ankati amakhalamo popanda chilolezo. Maloya ndi amene anathandizira kupeza zikalata zoti athamangitsidwe. "Ndi ndani amene ankayendetsa nkhani yothamangitsa anthu m'nyumba yomwe ndimakhala?" bambo uja anafunsa funso limeneli. Koma ndikuganiza kuti amadziwa kale yankho lake.

Inenso ndinkadziwa amene anachititsa. Kampani ya Drake & Sweeney ndi imene inachititsa kuti athamangi-

tsidwe mwachipongwe m’nyumba yomwe ankakhala n’kumakakhaula ndi mphepo panja.

3

Ndinauza Polly kuti tsiku limeneli ndipita kuntchito. Koma koyamba pa moyo wanga, tsikuli sindinapite kuntchito.

Pamene kunja kunkayamba kuchita sinowo, ndinakwera galimoto yanga ya Lexus, n'kumangoyendayenda m'misewu ya ku Washington. Sinowo anapitiriza kukhuthuka kuchokera kumwamba, koma ine ndinkangoyendetsabe galimoto yanga.

Kenako Polly anandiimbira foni. Iye ankamveka wankhawa kwambiri.

"Uli kuti?"

"Ndi ndani amene akufuna kudziwa kumene ndili?"

"Anthu ambirimbiri. Arthur Jacobs akukufuna komanso pali anthu ambirimbiri omwe akukudikirira kuti uwathandize pamilandu yawo."

"Ndili bwinobwino, Polly. Aliyense amene akundifuna umuuze kuti ndapita kuchipatala."

"Ulidi kuchipatala?"

"Ayi, koma mwina nthawi ina ndikhoza kupitako."

Ndinayendetsa galimoto yanga n'kuzungulira ku Georgetown. Sindinkapita kulikonse. Ndinkangozungulira basi. Zinkaonekeratu kuti sinowo apitirizabe kukhutuka mowonjezereka chifukwa kumwamba kunali kutachita mdima. Anthu ankayenda chothamanga m'mbali mwamsewu. Ndinaona munthu wina wosowa pokhala ndipo

ndinaganiza kuti mwina amamudziwa DeVon Hardy. Ndinadzifunsa kuti, Kodi anthu osowa pokhalawa amapita kuti kunja kukamazizira chonchi?

Ndinaimba foni kuchipatala. Ndinkafuna kufunsa Claire ngati tingadyere limodzi lanchi. Koma ndinauzidwa kuti Claire ali bize moti sindinayankhule naye.

Kenako ndinawongolera galimoto yanga molowera kumpoto chakum'mawa, kudutsa Logan Circle n'kulowa m'dera losalongosoka lodzaza ndi zigawenga. Ndinaponda galimoto yanga mpaka pamene ndinafika mumsewu womwe kunali 14th Street Law Center. Ndinaimitsa galimoto yanga pa 14th and Q, mumtima ndikuganiza kuti ndi kuopsa kwa derali ndikhoza osadzaionanso galimoto yanga yodulayo.

Ofesi ya maloyayo inali m'nyumba ina yakale yomwe inamangidwa ndi njerwa zofiira ndipo inkaoneka kuti yaona zilumika zambiri. Mawindo a nsanjika yapamwamba ankatetetezedwa ndi matambwa omwe anali kunja kwa magalasi.

Khomo la ofesiyo linali losatseka. Ndinalowa muofesiyo n'kusiyana ndi sinowo ankagwa panja uja ndipo zinkangokhala ngati ndalowa kudziko lina.

Inali ofesi ya maloya ndithu, koma munalibe mipando yodula ngati ya ku Drake & Sweeney. Pamalo olandirira alendo panali madesiki atatu achitsulo ndipo onse anali odzaza ndi mafaelo. Mafaelo enanso anali ataunjikidwa pansi pakalapeti yakutha.

Pamalowa panalinso makompyuta komanso mashini opangira fotokope omwe ankachita kuonekeratu kuti ndi amakedzana. Pakhoma panali chithunzi chachikulu cha Martin Luther King. Zinali zoonekeratu kuti anthu amakhamukira kuofesi yafumbiyi ndi mavuto awo.

"Tikuthandizeni bambo?" anafunsa mayi wina ye-

mwe anakhala padesiki pomwe panali dzina lakuti Sofia Mendoza. Mayiyu ankaoneka kuti ndi wa ku Mexico. Ngakhale sankamwetulira, ineyo ndinamumwetulira. Zimenezi zinali zodabwitsa kwambiri. Ndikutero chifukwa ku Drake & Sweeney palibe amene angayankhule ndi mlendo mwanjira imeneyo. Kungoyerekeza kutero ntchito ikhoza kukuthera. Koma sipanatenge nthawi kuti ndizindikire kuti Sofia anali munthu wofunika kwambiri mu ofesiyi.

"Ndikufuna kukumana ndi Mordecai Green," ndinatero. Pa nthawiyi m'pamene Mordecai Green anatuluka mu ofesi yake.

Sofia anapitiriza zomwe ankachita.

Green anali wathupi. Anali wamtali mwina mamita awiri. Anali wa zaka za m'ma 50 ndipo kumutu kwake kunali imvi. Paphuno yake panali patapachikidwa magalasi ofiira.

Iye anakuwa n'kuuza Sofia zokhudza failo inayake ndipo kenako anatembenukira kwa ine.

"Ndikuthandizeni bambo?"

"Ndimafuna ndikufunseni nkhani yokhudza DeVon Hardy," ndinatero ndipo kenako ndinamupatsa khadi langa losonyeza kuti ndimagwira ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney.

Anandiyang'ana kwa kanthawi ndipo kenako anaponya maso kwa Sofia yemwe ankayankhula mofulumira kwambiri patelefoni m'Chispanya. Mordekai Green anabwereranso mu ofesi yake ndipo ine ndinamutsatira.

Ofesi yake inali yaing'ono kwambiri ndipo inalibe mawindo. Desiki yomwe inali muofesiyo komanso pansi panali patadzaza ndi mafaelo komanso mabuku a zamalamulo.

"Mpando ndi umenewo," anatero. "Koma pepani

kuti ndi wakuda. Mwati mukufuna kudziwa zambiri zo-
khudza DeVon Hardy?"

Ndinakhala pansi.

"Ndinali m'gulu la anthu omwe anagwidwa ndi DeVon Hardy pamene amaphedwa dzulo," ndinatero. "Koma m'mawawu ndinaganiza zobwera kuno kuti ndidzafufuze zokhudza munthu ameneyu. Mukuganiza kuti pali chinachake chimene chinamuchititsa kuti apange zimene zija?"

"Chifukwa chake ndi choti anathamangitsidwa m'nyumba imene amakhala," anatero Mordecai Green. "Miyezi ingapo yapitayo anasamukira m'nyumba ina yakutha yomwe ili pakona ya Florida Avenue. Kwa munthu wosowa pokhala inali yabwino ndithu. Inali ndi denga, matoileti angapo komanso madzi."

"Nyumbayo ndi ya ndani?"

Mordecai anasolola failo pamulu womwe unali padesiki yake. Anaiyang'ana n'kutsimikizira kuti ndi imenedi amafuna. Kenako anaitsegula n'kuyang'ana zomwe zinalembedwa m'menemo kwa kanthawi.

"Ndi ya kampani ina yotchedwa RiverOaks."

"Ndiye kuti maloya omwe amaimira kampani ya RiverOaks amachokera ku Drake & Sweeney, eti?"

"N'kutheka."

"Basi ndi zomwezo?"

"Ayi. Ndinamva zoti DeVon Hardy komanso anthu ena anathamangitsidwa m'nyumbayo popanda kupatsidwa nthawi yoti asamukire kwina."

"Komatu palibe lamulo lomwe limaletsa mwininyumba kuthamangitsa anthu omwe angolowa m'nyumba popanda chilolezo."

"Zoona. Koma ndi kuphwanya malamulo ngati wathamangitsa walendi m'nyumba popanda kumuuziratu ku-

ti akasake nyumba ina."

"Kodi DeVon Hardy anali walendi?"

"Sindikudziwa."

Kenako ndinaganiziranso funso lina.

"Ndiye DeVon Hardy anadziwa bwanji zokhudza Drake & Sweeney?"

"Kayatu. Chomwe ndikudziwa ndi choti anali munthu wanzeru zake ndithu. N'zoona kuti anali wobalalika, koma sikuti anali wopanda nzeru."

Ndinali nditamudyera nthawi yokwanira Mordecai Green. Iye anayang'ana wotchi yake, ndipo nanenso ndinayang'ana yanga. Kenako tinapatsana manambala n'kulonjezana kuti tilumikizananso nthawi ina.

Iye ankathandiza anthu osawerengeka omwe ankakhala m'misewu powaimira monga loya wawo. Anali loya wabwino kwambiri.

Pamene ndinkatuluka muofesiyo, Sofia anali akuyakhulabe ndi munthu patelefoni ndipo sanavutike n'komwe kundiyang'ana. Nditatuluka panja ndinapeza galimoto yanga yodula ija idakali pomwemo, itafunda bulangete la sinowo.

4

Nditachoka ku ofesi ya Mordecai Green, ndinazungulira m'tauni pagalimoto yanga ija sinowo akugwa mosalekeza. Monga loya yemwe ankayenera kugwira ntchito mwakhama maola okwanira patsiku, maola omwe anthu ankawalipirira ndalama zankhaninkhani, sindinkafunika kumangoyendayenda chonchi ngati wamisala. Sindinkafunika kumangotsatira magalimoto ena mumsewu ndilibe cholinga chopita kulikonse. Koma ndi zimene ndinkachita tsopano.

Sindinkafuna kupita kunyumba kwathu kopanda anthu kuja. Sindinkafunanso kupita kubala, chifukwa ndinkadziwa kuti ndikangotero sindikachokakonso. Choncho ndinkangoyendetsa galimoto yanga. Ndinadutsa mbali zomwe anthu osauka kwambiri ankakhala zomwe ndinali ndisanadutsepo m'mbuyomo.

Kenako ndinapita ku Drake & Sweeney. Ndinakwera chikepi chomwe ndinakwera limodzi ndi bambo anaphedwa uja. Ndinadutsa m'kolido yopita ku ofesi yanga ndipo kenako ndinatsegula chitseko n'kukhala padesiki yanga. Koyamba pa moyo wanga ndinayamba kuganizira za kudula kwa zinthu zomwe zinali mu ofesiyo—desiki, mpando wabwino womwe ndinkakhalira komanso kalapeti yapamwamba.

Kodi sitinkangothamangitsa ndalama, m'maofesi athuwa? N'chifukwa chiyani tinkagwira ntchito mwakha-

ma kwambiri kuti tigule makalapeti apamwamba komanso madesiki odula? Kodi chimenechi chinali chifukwa chomveka chogwirira ntchito mwakhama? Kodi umenewu ndi moyo womwe ndinkafuna?

Nditakhala mu ofesi yanga yodzaza ndi zinthu zodulayo, ndinayamba kuganizira za Mordecai Green, yemwe ankagwiritsa ntchito nthawi yake pothandiza anthu ovutika.

Ndinali ndi mameseji 10 patebulo panga ochokera kwa anthu omwe ankafuna ndiwaimire pamilandu. Koma palibe nkhani imene inandichititsa chidwi kuti ndiitenge. Ntchitoyi inali itayamba kuchoka kukhosi kwanga.

Amene ankafuna kuti ndiwathandizewo anali makampani akuluakulu ndipo nthawi zambiri milandu yawo inkakhudzanso makampani ena akuluakulu. Mulandu ukayambika, unkatenga zaka zambirimbiri. Maloya mahandiredi angapo ankathandizana pa mlandu uliwonse ndipo nthawi zonse ankangokhalira kutumizirana mapepala okhudza mlanduwo.

Polly anandibweretsera mabisiketi. Anawaika patebulo akumwetulira. Popeza nthawi yoweruka inali itakwana, anaweruka n'kumapita kwawo. Kenako maloya angapo anafika ndipo anandifunsa kuti, "Zikuyenda?" ndipo nditawayankha ananyamuka n'kumapita. Nawonso ayenera ankapita kwawo.

Nditatsala ndekha, ndinatenga failo yaikulu ya mlandu wina, kenako ndinaisiya pansi n'kutenganso ina. Kodi ndi mlandu uti womwe ndingagwirirepo ntchito lero? Ndinazindikira kuti palibe mlandu uliwonse umene ukundisangalatsa. Sindinkafunanso kugwira ntchito imeneyi. Ndinkaona kuti ndi kungotaya nthawi tsopano.

Ndinapita pakompyuta yanga n'kuyamba kufufuza mafailo a anthu omwe tinkawaimira pamilandu. Kampani

ya RiverOaks inatsegulidwa mu 1977 m'dera la hagerstown ku Maryland. RiverOaks inali private company choncho zinali zovuta kudziwa zambiri zokhudza kampaniyi.

Kampani ya RiverOaks inkathandizidwa pamilandu ndi Drake & Sweeney ndipo amene ankaimira kampaniyi pamilandu anali loya wina dzina lake Braden Chance. Dzinali sindinkalidziwa choncho ndinafufuza zambiri m'mafailo a kampani yathu. Braden Chance anali patina woona za kugula ndi kugulitsa nyumba. Ofesi yake inali pa nsanjika ya nambala 4. Anali ndi zaka 45, anali pabanja komanso anachita maphunziro ake a zauloya pakoleji ya Duke.

Panali mafailo 42 okhudza RiverOaks. 4 anali okhudza kuthamangitsa anthu m'nyumba zawo. Kampani ya RiverOaks inagula chinyumba chosungiramo zinthu ku Florida Avenue. Pa January 27, anthu ena osowa pokhala anathamangitsidwa m'chinyumbacho ndipo m'modzi wa iwo monga mmene ndinkadziwira pa nthawiyi anali De-Von Hardy.

Panali failo ina yokhudza nkhaniyi yomwe inali ndi nambala. Nambala imeneyi inkasonyeza kuti ndi Braden Chance yekha amene ayenera kuitsegula. Ndinalemba dzina la failoyo komanso nambala yakeyo n'kutuluka kupita pa nsanjika ya nambala 4.

Nditafika kumeneko ndinafunsa legal assistant yemwe anakhala padesiki yake kuti ofesi ya Braden Chance ndi iti ndipo anandilozera khomo lina lotsegula. Ngakhale nthawi yoweruka inali itakwana kalekale, Chance anali adakali padesiki yake, akuoneka kuti ndi wotanganidwa kwambiri.

Sanasangalale kwenikweni atandiona ndikulowa mu ofesi yake. Ku Drake & Sweeney, munthu amayenera kuimbira kaye munthu foni n'kumupempha kuti akufuna

atayankhula naye asanapite kukakumana naye. Koma zimenezi sizinandidandaulitse.

Chance sanandiuze kuti ndikhale pampando, koma ine ndinangodzipezera malo n'kukhala pansi ndipo zimenezinso sizinamusangalatse.

"Kodi unali limodzi ndi munthu amene wawomberedwa uja?" anatero Chance mongogwaza nditangotchula dzina la DeVon Hardy.

"Inde," ndinatero.

"Zinalitu zoopsa, eti?"

"A-a, basi zadutsa. Ndinamva zoti Mr. Hardy, munthu wawomberedwa uja, anathamangitsidwa m'chinyumba chimene ankakhala. Kodi nkhani imeneyi inkasamaliridwa ndi kampani yathuyi?"

"Inde," anatero Chance, koma sanandiyang'ane pamene ankayankhula. Ndikuganiza kuti Arthur Jacobs anali ataonanso failo ija limodzi ndi Chance m'mawa wa tsikulo.

"Bwanji, pali vuto?" anafunsa Chance.

"Kodi anangolowamo kapena amachita lendi?"

"Anangolowamo. Onse anali anthu osowa pokhala ndipo kampani imene tikuiimirayi itagula nyumbayo inawauza kuti achoke."

"Ukunena zoona kuti anangolowamo? Sanali alendi?"

Chance anayamba kuoneka wokwiya. "Kodi ukufuna chiyani?"

"Ndingaone nawo failo ya nkhaniyi?"

"Ayi."

"N'chifukwa chiyani sukufuna kuti ndiione?"

"Ndili bize. Ndipo tuluka mu ofesi yanga ino."

"Ngati anangolowamo popanda chilolezo, ndiye kuti palibe nkhani. Nanga n'chifukwa chiyani ukundikaniza

kuona failoyo?"

"Chifukwa choti ndi yanga ndipo ndanena kuti ayi. Pali funso lina?"

"Chifukwa chimene waperekacho si chomveka."

Kenako anaimirira dzanja lake litaloza kuchitseko. Ndinamwetulira n'kunyamuka kumapita.

Legal assistant anali panja pa ofesi yake uja anamva zonse zomwe tinkakambirana ndipo nditamuyang'ana pamene ndinkadutsa desiki yake anamwetulira ndipo nanenso ndinamumwetulira.

"Akuluwo siziyenda m'mutu muja," anatero chapansipansi. Ndinamwetuliranso n'kunena kuti, "Zikuonekadi choncho."

Koma kodi Chance ankabisa chiyani? Moto sufuka popanda utsi. Pali chinachake chimene ankabisa ndipo chiyenera chinali mufailoyo. Ndinkafunika kuipeza failo imeneyo. Kenako ndinabwerera ku ofesi yanga kuti ndikaganizire njira yabwino yomwe ndinkaipezere.

Ndikuganizira zimenezi, foni yanga inalira. Anali Claire.

"N'chifukwa chiyani wapita ku ofesi?" anatero ndi mawu ozizira kuposa sinowo yemwe ankagwa panja.

Ndinayang'ana wotchi yanga ndipo ndinakumbukira kuti tinapangana kuti tikadyere limodzi chakudya chamadzulo.

"Ndili, um, munthu wina yemwe ndikumuimira pamlandu anandiimbira foni." Ndinakumbukira kuti ndinagwiritsapo ntchito bodza limeneli ulendo wina m'mbuyomo. Koma aa basi.

"Ndikukudikiriratu ine Michael. Kapenatu ndiyambe kudya?"

"Ayi, ndikunyamuka moti nditulukira kunyumbako posachedwapa."

Ndinachoka ku ofesiko chothamanga n'kukalowa musinowo, koma ndinalibe nazo ntchito kuti kudyera limodzi chakudya madzulowa kwalepherekanso.

Maola angapo atadutsa, ine ndi Claire tinali tikumwa khofi kukhitchini pafupi ndi windo. Sinowo uja anali atasiya kugwa.

"Bwanji tipite ku Florida," ndinatero.

Anandiyang'ana atanyansitsa nkhope. "Ku Frorida?"

"Chabwino, nanga bwanji ku Bahamas. Tikhoza kunyamuka mawa."

"Ayi, sizingatheke."

"Ndikunenetsa ndithu. Sindigwira ntchito masiku akubwerawa . . ."

"Chifukwa?"

"Chifukwa choti ndangotsala pang'ono kupenga. Ku Drake & Sweeney ukamaona kuti ulowa m'tchire, umangofunika kutenga ofu kwa masiku angapo kuti zisakusokonekere."

"Wangotsala pang'ono kupenga."

"Inde. Zimasangalatsa kwabasi. Anthu amakuchitira zinthu mwachifundo. Amakumwetulira. Polly anabwera kudzandipatsa mabisiketi lero. Zinandikhudza kwabasi."

Claire anaipitsanso nkhope yake n'kunena kuti, "Ayi, sizingatheke."

Basi, nkhani imeneyo inathera pomwepo. Ndinkadziwa kuti sangalole kuti tipite kwinakwake. Iye anali dokotala. Anali atapangana ndi anthu ambirimbiri kuti akumane nawo n'cholinga choti awathandize. Komanso chifukwa china ndi choti sankafuna kuyenda ndi ine.

"Chabwino," ndinatero. "Ndiye ine ndipita ku Memphis kwa masiku angapo kuti ndikaone makolo anga."

“Ayi, chabwino,” anatero. Anayankha mosonyeza kuti akungofuna kuthana nazo.

“Patha chaka ndisanapite kukawaona. Ndiye ndikuona kuti ino ndi nthawi yabwino yoti ndipite. Ndimadana kwambiri ndi sinowo komanso sindikufuna kugwira ntchito. Monga ndanenera kale, ndangotsala pang’ono kupenga.”

Claire anadzuka pamene anakhala n’kupita kukagona. “Chabwino, tiyankhulana,” anandiponyera mawuwa kudzera pamapewa ake. Pamenepo ndinazindikira kuti ukwati wathu wasokonekera. Zinkandiwawa kwambiri kuti ndikapita kukawaona, ndikafunika kuwauza nkhani yosasangalatsayi.

Makolo anga anali ndi zaka za m’ma 60 ndipo tsopano ankasangalala ndi kumangokhala pakhomo koyamba pa moyo wawo. Amayi anali manejala kubanki. Pomwe adadi anali loya ku Atlanta. Ankagwira ntchito mwakhama kwambiri, anayesetsa kusunga ndalama ndipo ankandichitira chilichonse chimene ndinkafunikira. Adadi ankafunitsitsa nditakhala loya, potengera chitsanzo chawo.

Ndinabwereka galimoto pabwalo landege la Memphis ndipo ndinayendetsa galimotoyo molowera kudera lokhala anthu olemera komwe azungu ankakhala. Anthu akuda ankakhala pakati pa tauniyo ndipo azungu ankakhala kumapeto kwake. Nthawi zina anthu akuda ankasamuka pakati pa tauniyo n’kupita m’madera apafupi ndi azungu ndipo azunguwo ankasamukira kutsogolo powathawa kuti asayandikane nawo.

Makolo anga ankhala nyumba ina yomwe inazunguliridwa ndi bwalo losewerera gofu. Ukalowa m’nyumba unkatha kuona bwalolo kuchokera mbali zonse ukakhala pawindo. Nditafika kubwalo landege kuja ndina-

waimbira telefoni moti amayi ankadziwa kuti ndikubwera.

"Zinthu zili bwino koma?" anandifunsa amayi atangondiona.

"Zili bwino, zikuyenda ndithu."

"Nanga Claire ali kuti? Mwakhalatu osatiimbira kwa nthawi yaitali, mukudziwa. Sindinamve mawu anu kwa miyezi iwiri yathunthu."

"Claire ali bwino. Tonse tidakali ndi moyo komanso tili ndi thanzi ndipo tikumagwira ntchito mwakhama kwambiri."

"Mukumakhala ndi nthawi yokwanira yochitira zinthu limodzi monga banja?"

"Ayi."

"Mukumapeza nthawi yochezera limodzi?"

"Pang'ono." Misozi inalengeza m'maso mwa amayi. "Pepani amayi. Banja latikanika basi. Ndi mwayi wokhawokha kuti tilibe ana."

Kuti ndingosinthako nkhani, ndinawafotokozera nkhani ya bambo anawomberedwa uja.

"Koma zikukuyendera mwana wanga?" anafunsa akundiyang'ana mwankhawa.

"Zikuyenda. Si ine ndili pano? Kampani yomwe ndimagwirako ntchito yandipatsa masiku angapo oti ndipitidwe mphepo ina. N'chifukwa chake ndabwera kudzakuonani."

"Zokhumudwitsa kwambiri. Banja, komanso kukumana ndi zimenezi. Sizikuyenda ayi."

Chakumadzulo kwa tsikulo, ine ndi adadi tinasewera gofu.

"Adadi, ine sindikusangalala kugwira ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney," ndinatero. "Ntchito imene ndikugwira sikundisangalatsa."

"Moyotu ndiye umenewo mwana wanga. Iwe uma-

ganiza kuti anthu omwe amagwira ntchito zolira m'mafakitale aja amasangalala ndi ntchito imene amagwira? Bolansotu iweyo ukulandira ndalama zambiri ndipo ukulemera, koma anthu amene aja amangosaukirasaukirabe. Uzisangalala ndi mwayi umene uli nawo."

Adadi ankasangalala. Ankawina gemu ya gofu imene tinkasewera. Patatha 10 minitsi ananena kuti, "Ukufuna kuyamba ntchito ina?"

"Ndidakaiganizira nkhani imeneyi."

"Bwanji osangonena zenizeni zimene ukufuna kuchita?"

Monga mwa nthawi zonse, ndinazindikira kuti andigwira. Ndinkangokhala ngati ndikuzemba winawake.

"Ndikufuna kuyamba kuthandiza anthu osowa pokhala," ndinatero. "Ndikufuna ndiziwaimira pamilandu," ndinawonjezera ndikuyankhula mofulumira.

Adadi sanasiye kusewera gofu. Anayendetsa ndodo yawo n'kumenya mwamphamvu mpira womwe unaulukira m'mwamba. "Ndikumva chisoni kuti ukutaya mwayi umene uli nawo mwana wanga," anatero. "Utapiriratu ukhoza kukhala patina zaka zingapo zikubwerazi."

Tinayamba kutsatira mpira anamenya uja. "Ukufuna moyo wako usinthiretu chifukwa choti bambo wina wosowa pokhala anaphedwa iwe ukuona? Ukungofunika kupuma pang'ono basi n'kubweranso kuntchito."

Ndikungofunika kuchita zomwezo basi?

5

Ndinabwerera lachisanu ndipo pamene ndinkafika kunyumba madzulo, sinanapezeko munthu. Ndinangopeza kapepala komwe Claire analemba kukhitchini. Mofanana ndi ine, nayenso anali atapita kukaona makolo ake ku Providence masiku apitawo. Ndinkadziwa kuti nayenso Claire ankafuna kuthetsa banja. Chomwe sindinkadziwa ndi choti ankangofuna kapena ankafunitsitsa.

Ndinapita kukawongola miyendo. Kunja kunkazizira kwambiri komanso kunali mphepo. Ndinadutsa nyumba zokongola ndipo m'nyumbazo munali mabanja omwe ankadya, kuseka komanso kucheza mosangalala kwinaku akuwotha moto.

Kenako ndinatulukira mu M Street. Likakhala lachisanu mumsewuwu munkadzaza anthu ochita zinjoye. Mabala komanso malo ogulitsa khofi munkangoti pichitipichiti anthu ena akudikira pamizera kuti alowe m'malesitilanti.

Ndinaima pawindo la malo ena ochitira madansi ndikumvetsera nyimbo yomvetsa chisoni, nsapato zanga zili m'sinowo. M'katimo anyamata ndi atsikana ankamwa komanso kuvina limodzi. Koyamba pa moyo wanga ndinayamba kuona kuti ndine munthu wamkulu.

Ndinali ndi zaka 32, ndipo kwa zaka 5 zapitazo ndinkangokhalira kugwira ntchito modzipha moti ndinali nditagwira ntchito yomwe anthu ena amaigwira kwa zaka

20. Ndinali nditatopa munthune. Atsikana okongola omwe ankavina ndi anyamata m'katimo anali oti sangandiyang'ane kawiri.

Kenako ndinabwerera kunyumba. Nthawi ili cha m'ma 9, foni inalira. Anali Mordecai Green.

"Kodi uli bize?" anafunsa.

"Pali zimene mukufuna ndikuthandizeni kuchita?

"Inde. Malo othandizira anthu osowa pokhala adzaziratu koma palibe anthu oti atithandize kuwasamalira."

"Komatu . . . sindinayambepo ndagwira ntchito ngati imeneyo."

"Kodi umatha kupaka bata pa buledi?"

"Inde, ndimatha."

"Basitu ndiye kuti ukhoza kutithandiza. Panopa tili ku tchalitchi ku 13th and Euclid."

"Ndikupezani isanathe 20 minitsi."

Ndinavala zovala zakale kwambiri zimene ndinali nazo. Ndinavala jinzi komanso jekete labuluu. Ndinachotsa ndalama zina zimene zinali muwaleti yanga. Pamene dinkatseka chitseko cha nyumba yathu, mumtimamu ndinkamva bwino ndipo sindikudziwa kuti n'chifukwa chiyani ndinkamva choncho.

Ndinaimika galimoto yanga yodula ija moyang'anizana ndi tchalitchi ndinauzidwa chija. Ndinkaganiza kuti amaliwongo ena andiukira ndikangotuluka m'galimotoyo, koma si zimene zinachitika.

Kunalibe zigawenga. Sinowo ankagwa uja anachititsa kuti m'misewu muzingokhala ngati anthu anasamuka ndipo munalibe choopsa chilichonse tsopano. Ndinalowa m'tchalichi chija n'kukalowa m'chipinda chinachake chachikulu. M'menemo ndinapezamo mutadzaza ndi anthu osowa pokhala.

Zinali zovuta kumvetsa nditaona kuchuluka kwa

anthu omwe anali m'menemo. Anthu ongodzipereka ankapereka kwa anthuwo mabulangete komanso ma apozi. Mordecai ankapungulira anthu ena juwisi m'makapu opangidwa ndi mapepala ndipo ankangokhalira kuyankhula. Anthu ena anali ataima panzera wautali moleza mtima podikirira kuti alandire chakudya chomwe chinali patebulo.

Ndinapita pamene panali Mordecai ndipo anandipatsa moni ngati anadziwana nane kalekale.

"Ilipotu lero ntchito," anatero. "Kunja kukachita sinowo wochuluka timapezeka kuti tagwira ntchito usiku wonse." Kenako anandilozera pamene panali buledi, bata, nyama ndi tchizi. "Ntchito yaketu ndi yosokoneza. Uzipereka nyama kwa anthu 10 kenako n'kuyamba kupereka tchizi kwa anthunso 10. Zamveka?"

"Zamveka."

"Zikulowa m'thupi posachedwapa." Anatero kenako n'kuzimiririka.

Ndinapanga sangweji 10 mofulumira, kenako ndinachepetsa liwiro n'kumagwira ntchito ndikuyang'ana anthu omwe anali m'chipindacho. Ambiri mwa anthu osowa pokhalawa anangozyolikira pansi. Anthu ongodzipereka aja ankati akawapatsa chakudya ankawathokoza ponena kuti "zikomo kwambiri." Kenako ankayamba kudya mosinira kwambiri. Ngakhale ana ankadya zimene apatsidwa mosamala kwambiri.

Kenako Mordecai anatulukira n'kuyamba kupanga masangweji pambali panga.

"Kodi zakudyazi zimachokera kuti?" ndinamufunsa.

"Anthu amitima yabwino ndi amene amatipatsa. Madzulo ano tili ndi mwayi chifukwa talandiranso nyama ya nkhuku. Nthawi zambiri timangolandira masamba

basi.”

“Kodi malo ngati ano alipo angati m’tauni muno?”

“Malo ano si othandizira anthu osowa pokhala. Eni ake a tchalitchichi anatsegula zitseko zawo ataona kuti kunjaku nyengo yaipa. Zitseko zikatsekedwa onse amachoka n’kubwerara kumene anali.”

Ndinayesa kumvetsa zimene ankatanthauza. “Ndiye anthuwa amakhala kuti?”

“Ena amangolowa nyumba iliyonse yomwe sikukhalidwa. Koma amenewo amakhala amwayi. Ena amagona m’mbali mwa misewu, ena m’malo oimika magalimoto, m’malo okwerera mabasi komanso kunsi kwa milatho. Nthawi zambiri amakhala bwinobwino, kungoti sizingatheke kuti akhale panja ndi mmene sinowo akugweramu. Kunjaku kukuzizira udyo. Akufunika kupeza malo ena abwinoko oti akhale. N’chifukwa chake apezeka kuno.”

“Ndiye malo osamalira anthu osowa pokhalawo alipo angati?”

“Alipo mwina 20. Koma malo awiri atsekedwa posachedwapa. Ndalama ndizo zavuta.”

“Kumakhala mabedi angati?”

“Mwina 5 sauzande.”

“Nanga anthu osowa pokhalawa alipo angati?”

“Funso labwino. Anthu amenewa ndi ovuta kwambiri kuwawerenga. Koma n’kutheka kuti mwina alipo 10 sauzande.”

Ndinaganizira mfundo imeneyi kwa kanthawi. Kenako ndinafunsa Mordecai zokhudza moyo wake.

“Kodi muli pabanja?”

“Inde. Ndili ndi mkazi, ana aamuna atatu. M’modzi ali kukoleji, wina ali ku army. Ndipo wina . . . mwana wathu m’modzi anamwalira zaka 10 zapitazo. Anachita ku-

phedwa munsewu. Zigawenga. Nanga inu?"

"Ndili pabanja. Tilibe ana."

Mordecai anazimiririkanso. Munthu wina wongodzipereka anabweretsa mabisiketi. Ndinatenga mabisiketi 4 n'kupita pakona ina pomwe mayi wachitsikana ankagona atakumbatira mwana wam'manja ndipo ana ena aang'ono aamuna anali atagona pambali pake, atafunda bulangete.

Mwana wokulirapo atangomva fungo la mabisiketi ndinatenga aja maso ake anatseguka. Ndinamupatsa bisiketi m'modzi. Maso ake ankawala pamene ankalandira ndipo posakhalitsa anamutafuna. Kenako anandipemphanso wina.

Mwanayo anali woonda, ndipo ayenera kuti anali ndi zaka zosakwana 4. Kenako mayi ake aja anadzuka. Ataona mabisiketi anali m'manja mwanga aja, anamwetulira.

"Dzina lako ndi ndani?" ndinamufunsa mwana uja. Nditangomupatsa bisiketi wachiwiri uja, anasanduka mnzanga weniweni.

"Ontario."

"Uli ndi zaka zingati?"

Anandionetsa zala 4.

"4?" ndinatero.

Anayankha kuti inde ndipo anatambasula dzanja lake kuti ndimupatsenso bisiketi wina ndipo ndinamupatsa mosangalala. Ndinkangofuna kumangomupatsa zinthu, chilichonse chimene akufuna.

"Mumakhala kuti?" ndinamufunsa chapansipansi.

"M'galimoto," anayankhanso monong'ona. "Kodi muli ndi juwisi wina?"

"Inde." Ndinapita kukhitchini n'kukamutengera kapu ya juwisi komanso mabisiketi ena.

Mayi ake aja anali atayambiranso kugona. Monga mmene ambiri osowa pokhala ankachitira, ankangotembenukatembenuka. Ankamva kuzizira. Ndinamva chisoni moti ndinavula jekete langa n'kumufunditsa.

Kenako mwana wam'manja uja anayamba kulira ndipo anamudzutsa. Popanda kuganiza, ndinamulandira mwanayo ndikumwetulira. Anayamikira kwambiri kuti ndamulandira mwanayo kuti apezeko katulo. Ndinakhala pamenepo mpaka cha m'ma 3 koloko m'bandakucha.

Tsiku lotsatira linali Loweruka. Kungochokera Lachiwiri pamene ndinakumana ndi bambo anawomberedwa uja, sindinapitenso ku Drake & Sweeney kukagwira ntchito. Ndinkangokhalira kugona basi. Sindinkafunanso kugwira ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney. Sindinkafuna kubwererakonso. Sindinkafuna ngakhale pang'ono.

Ndinadya chakudya cha m'mawa palesitilanti ina ku M ndipo m'maganizo mwanga munabwera Ontario. Ndinadzifunsa kuti kodi wadya chiyani mwana amene uja m'mawa uno. Kenako ndinapita kukashopa. Ndinagula maswiti, zidole zoseweretsa ana, sopo komanso zovala zotentha za ana. Ndinali ndisanasangalalepo chonchi pogula zinthu za ndalama yokwana 200 dolazi.

Ndinkafuna kuwononga ndalama zambiri. Ndinkafuna nditalipitira mayi ndi ana ake aja kuti azikagona kuhotelo kwa mwezi wathunthu. Ndinkafunanso kukasumira munthu amene anachititsa kuti azisowa pokhalayo. Ndinkafuna nditathandiza banjali poliimira monga loya kubwalo lamilandu.

Ndinabwerera kutchalitchi kuja. Zidole komanso zovala zija ndinazisiya mugalimoto yanga. Ndinafunafuna mayi ndi ana ake aja paliponse koma sindinawaone. Kenako ndinafunsa Mordecai ngati akudziwa kumene apita.

“Ndani angadziwe kumene apita? Anthu osowa pokhalawatu amangoyendayenda. Lero amati kupezeka kuno, mawa akapezeka kwina.”

Tsiku lotsatira, Lamlungu, ndinakhala kukhitchini n’kumaonera TV kwinaku ndikudya chakudya cham’mawa. Koma nkhani yomwe inayamba kuulutsidwa pamenepo inachititsa kuti ndisiye kudya. Ndinamva muulutsi ankanena, koma sindinkafuna kuzikhulupirira. Ndinaimirira n’kumayenda pang’onopang’ono molowera kumene kunali TVyo. Miyendo yanga inali ikulemera, mtima wanga unali utasungunuka ndipo pakamwa panga panangoti pululu chfukwa chozizidwa ndi nkhaniyo.

Cha m’ma 11 usiku, apolisi a ku Washington anapeza galimoto yaing’ono pafupi ndi Fort Totten Park m’dera lina lazigawenga kumpoto chakum’mawa kwa mzindawu. Galimotoyo inali itaimikidwa mumsewu.

M’kati mwa galimotoyo munali mayi wachitsikana komanso ana ake. Onse anali atamwalira. Mayiyo anasiya galimoto yakuthayo ikulira n’cholinga choti m’galimotomo muzitentha. Kenako mpweya wapoizoni unadzaza m’galimotoyo ndipo ndi umene unawapha ali kutulo.

Anatchula dzina la mayiyo. Dzina lake linali Lontae Burton. Mwana wake wam’manja uja dzina lake linali Temeko. Ndipo ana aakuluko aja mayina awo anali Alonzo ndi Ontario.

Maswiti, zidole, sopo komanso zovala zawo zija zinali zidakali m’galimoto yanga.

6

Ndinali ndili ku 14th Street Law Center.

"Kodi kuwachitira mwambo wamaliro kungatenge ndalama zingati?" ndinafunsa Mordecai.

"Sindikudziwa. Ukufuna uwapangire mwambo wamaliro?"

"Inde, sizingakhale bwino kuti angopita mwanjira imeneyi. Ndikufuna titawapangira mwambo wabwino wa maliro."

"Chabwino. Tiye tichite zomwezo."

Tinakwera m'galimoto yokalamba ya Mordecai. Matupi a mayi ndi ana ake anamwalira aja anali ali kumotchale. Moredecai analowa m'motchalemo ngati m'nyumba mwake.

"Dzina langa ndi Mordecai Green, loya wa banja la a Burton," anatero kwa bambo wina yemwe anakhala mwankhawa padesiki lake m'motchalemo.

Dokotala wapachipatala chija anatulukira ndipo Mordecai anakankha chitseko chachikulu cholowera m'chipinda chosungira matupi a anthu.

M'chipindachi munali matupi omwe anagonekedwa pamatebulo atafunditsidwa nsalu. Mayina awo anali atamangiriridwa pazala zawo zakumiyendo.

Tinalowa n'kukaima pakona ina.

"Lontae Burton," anatero dokotala uja ndipo kenako anakoka nsalu anafunditsa thupilo mpaka m'chiuno.

Anali mayi a Ontario atavala diresi yoyera. Ankaoneka mofanana ndi mmene ankaonekera pamene ndinawaona masiku angapo apitawo. Ankangokhala ngati akugona. Maso anga anangoti dwi pa thupilo.

"Ndi ameneyo," anatero Mordecai mwamphamvu ngati kuti anadziwana naye kalekale.

Ana aja anafunditsidwa nsalu imodzi. Anawo anali atagonedwa mondondozana, manja awo ali m'mbali ngati asilikali. Ndinkafuna kugwira Ontario. Ndinkafuna kumuuza kuti pepa. Ndinkafuna kumudzutsa n'kumutenga kupita naye kunyumba, kukamupatsa chakudya komanso kumupatsa chilichonse chimene akufuna.

"Ndi amenewo," anatero Mordekai.

Ndinayang'ana kumwamba ndipo ndinamva mawu m'mutu mwanga, "Usalole kuti zangati zimenezi zidzachitikenso."

Dokotala uja anatitengera ku ofesi kwake. Tinathandiza nawo kulemba zinthu zonse zimene banjali linasiya. Chinthu chabwino chokhacho chimene anali nacho chinali jekete labuluu ndinafunditsa mayi uja basi.

"Uifuna jekete yakoyi?" anandifunsa Mordecai.

"Ayi."

Kenako ndinapita panja pamene Mordecai analowa mu ofesi ina kuti akakonze za dongosolo lamaliro. Mordecai anandiuza kuti akhoza kutchaja ndalama zochuluka kwambiri akaona zovala zanga zodula. Mumlungu umodzi wokha ndinali nditaona mitembo 5 anthu osowa pokhala. Bambo anawomberedwa uja anasinthiratu moyo wanga ndipo tsopano Ontario anachititsa kuti mtima wanga usweke.

Kenako ndinamva kugogoda pawindo la galimoto.

"Akuti tilipire 5 sauzande dolazi anthu onse 4," anandikuwira Mordecai ataweramira pachitseko cha gali-

motoyo.

“Chabwino,” ndinatero ndipo Mordecai anabwereranso n’kuzimiririka m’chipatala muja. Posakhalitsa anatulukiranso, akuyendenda mofulumira kwambiri.

“Maliro achitika Lachiwiri patchalitchi cha pachipatala chino. Padzakhalanso atolankhani. Nkhani yake ikuoneka kuti ikukula.”

“Zikomo kwambiri Mordecai,” ndinatero.

“Mwambo wamaliro ukangotha, anthu achita zionetsero pofuna kusonyeza kukwiya ndi zimene zachitika ndi banja la a Burton. Anthu ayenda ndawala mpaka kunyuymba zaboma ku Capitol Hill. Zonse zionetsedwa pa TV ndipo nawonso amanyuzipepala alemba za nkhaniyi. Ukuona bwanji, zili bwino ndi iwe?”

“Ayi.”

Ndinaimbira kuntchito n’kuwauza kuti sindigwira chifukwa ndikudwala. Nthawi itakwana cha m’ma 10 ndinanyamuka n’kupita kumaliro. Malirowo ankachitikira m’tchilitchi chokongola kwambiri. Zikuoneka kuti eni ake sankatsegula zitseko zake kuti anthu osowa pokhala alowemo ndipo ndinamvetsa chifukwa chake.

Ndinakhala ndekhandekha. Mordecai anali ndi anthu enaake awiri omwe sindinkawadziwa. Atolankhani anali ataunjikana pakona ina.

Ndinkathanso kuona mabokosi onse. Bokosi la mwana wam’manja lija linali laling’ono kwambiri. Mabokosi a Ontario ndi m’chimwene wake uja anali okulirapo. Makolo a Lontae Burton anali oti anamwalira, koma agogo ake anabwera kumalirowa.

Anaika maluwa pamabokosiwo ndipo kanthawi kena ndinkaganiza kuti atsegula mabokosiwo kuti aone komaliza m’dzukulu komanso zidzulululutubzi zake. Ndinali ndisanapitepo kumaliro a anthu akuda moti sindi-

nkadziwa zomwe zimachitika pamaliro awo. Ndinaonapo bokosi likutsegulidwa pamaliro mufilimu inayake yakalekale.

Mwambo wamaliro utangotha, ziwonetsero zija zinayambika. Anthu ambirimbiri ananyamula zithunzi zikuluzikulu za Lontae Burton ndipo m'munsi mwa nkhope yake munalembedwa kuti, "NDANI ANAPHA LONTAE?"

Athuwo asananyamuke, Mordecai anayankhula ndi gulu la anthulo. Iye sanakambe za anthu osowa pokhala aja.

Iye anafotokoza zomwe zinachitika ma awazi omaliza omwe banjali linali ndi moyo. Anafotokoza za chakudya chomwe anadya kutchalitchi kuja. Anafotokozanso za mabisiketi omwe kamnyamata kaja kanadya.

Anafotokoza mwatsatanetsatane mmene banja laling'onolo linanyamukira kutchalitchi kuja n'kubwereranso kumsewu, sinowo akukhuthuka.

Mordecai anafotokoza zinthu zomwe sankadziwa kuti zinachitika bwanji, koma ndinalibe nazo ntchito ndipo anthu ankamvetserawonso analibe nazo ntchito. Pamene ankayamba kufotokoza zokhudza zomwe zinachitika kuti banjali life, kusiya galimoto ikulira kuti asaume ndi mphepo, ndinamva azimayi omwe anandizungulira akulira. Ndinadziuza kuti ngati munthu ameneyu, Mordecai Green, ankachititsa kuti anthu azilira chonchi, ayenera anali loya wabwino kwambiri.

Mordecai atangomaliza kuyankhula, tonse tinanyamuka mwaunyinji n'kumapita ku Capitol, kunyumba zaboma titanyamula mabokosi aja. Ndinali ndisanachitepo ziwonetsero zangati zimenezi. Anthu olemera sachita ziwonetsero chifukwa moyo wawo umakhala wamtendere komanso wotetezeka. Malamulo amakhala kumbuyo kwa-

wo nthawi zonse.

Koma nanenso ndinali nditanyamula chithunzi cha mayi wachikuda wazaka 22 yemwe anamwalira mugalimoto yake. Ndinali nditasanduka munthu wosiyana kotheratu ndi mmene ndinalili ndisanakumane ndi bambo anawomberedwa uja komanso Ontario. Zinali zosatheka kuti ndibwererenso mwakale.

Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake sindinanyiyilike pamene patadutsa masiku angapo Mordecai Green anandiuza kuti tikakumane palesitilanti inayake pafupi ndi Dupont Circle.

Atandiuza kuti ndikhale loya ku ofesi yake ya 14th Street Law Center, ndinavomera nthawi yomweyo.

"Tizikulipira 30 sauzande dolazi pachaka," anatero Mordecai akumwetulira. "Ndipo ukhala patina nthawi yomweyo. Ndikufuna ndione ngati kampani ya Drake & Sweeney ingakulonjeze zoposa pamenepo."

Nanenso ndinamwetulira. Ndinangotsala pang'ono kumuuza zokhudza failo yomwe ndinkafuna kukaba ku Drake & Sweeney, failo yomwe ikanatithandiza kudziwa ngati DeVon Hardy anali walendi kapena ayi. Koma kenako ndinadziletsa.

Usiku umenewo ndinauza Claire zonse. Nthawi inali cha m'ma 10 ndipo tinali titakhala pamipando yomwe tinkaikonda makapu a waini ali m'manja. Kenako ndinamuuza kuti, "Pali nkhani yoti tikambirane."

"Ukufuna tikambirana chiyani?" anafunsa mokhala ngati sizikumukhudza.

"Ndikuganiza zosiya ntchito kukampani ya Drake & Sweeney."

"Owo, chabwino."

N'kutheka kuti ankadziwa kuti ndinena zimenezi, apo ayi ankangofuna kuonetsa ngati sizikumukhudzanso.

Ndinali nditamuuza kale zomwe zinachitika ndi banja la Lontae Burton.

“Ndithu, sindikufuna kugwiranso ntchito kukampani imene ija.”

“Chifukwa?”

“Ntchito yake ndi yobowa komanso sithandiza anthu kwenikweni. Ndikufuna kuyamba kuthandiza anthu omwe akufunikiradi thandizo. Wamukumbukira Mordecai Green? Ali ndi ofesi ya maloya ndipo wandiuza kuti ndikhoza kuyamba ntchito kukampani yake moti ndiyamba Lolemba likubwerali.”

“Anakuuza kuti azikulipira ndalama zingati?”

“30 sauzande pachaka.”

“Koma ndiye kulowa pansitu! Si kwinaku umalandira 130 sausande dolazi!”

“Cholinga cha munthu amene akufuna kuthandiza anthu osowa pokhala sichikhala ndalama.”

Ine nditangoyamba kumene ntchito yauloya komanso Claire atangoyamba kumene udokotala, cholinga chathu chinali kuthandiza anthu. Pa nthawiyo tinkadziuza kuti ndalama si zofunika kwenikweni. Nanga pano?

“Koma ndiye ndatopa,” anatero Claire. Anagugudiza waini wake n’kukalowa kuchipinda.

Tsiku lotsatira, anapita kukakumana ndi loya wothetsa ukwati. Ndinamulonjeza kuti ndisamuka m’nyumbamo kumapeto kwa mlungu.

7

Ndinapita ku Drake & Sweeney kuti ndikamalizitse zina ndi zina monga tsiku langa lomaliza kugwira ntchito. Koma kampaniyo sinkafuna kuti ndisiye ntchito. Ntchito inali yochuluka kwambiri ndipo sankafuna kupeza munthu wina watsopano.

Ndinaitanidwa kuti ndikadye chakudya cham'mawa ndi Arthur Jacobs m'chipinda chodyera chomwe chinali munsanjika ya nambala 8. Ankaganiza kuti sindingalole kukana mwayi womadya chakudya chabwino m'chipinda chodyera mapanita chomwe maloya apakampaniyi ankadya akabwera m'mawa tsiku lililonse. Ankaganiza kuti zimenezi zisintha maganizo anga.

Tikudya, Arthur anandiuza kuti andilola kumakathandiza ku ofesi ya Mordecai Green ija kwa chaka chathunthu. Anandiuza kampani ya Drake & Sweeney yaganiza zoyamba kuthandiza anthu ovutika mwanjira imeneyi. Anandilonjezanso kuti kuwonjezera pa 30 sauzande yomwe ndinkayembekezera kumalandira ku ofesi ya Mordecai ija azindipatsa ndalama yapamwamba kuti yonse izifanana ndi imene ndinkalandira ku Drake & Sweeney.

Ndinamwetulira. Ankafuna kuti ndikhalebe komweko, koma ndizikathandizanso anthu ovutika monga mnyamata wa Drake & Sweeney. M'kati mwa chaka chimenecho, makasitomala anga akanaperekedwa kaye

kwa munthu wina kuti adyerere thukuta langa. Ndiyeno ankandinamiza kuti pambuyo pa chaka ndidzabwerera ndikusangalala ndipo adzandibwezeranso makasitomala anga aja.

Sindinakane mwayi anandipatsawu nthawi yomweyo. Ubwino wake ndi woti anayesetsa. Arthur ankaona kunena kuti kampani ya Drake & Sweeney imafuna kumaimira milandu anthu ovutika. Koma zomwe ankachita zinkasonyeza kuti amaona kuti ndalama zomwe amapeza akamathandiza anthu olemera ndi zofunika kwambiri kuposa chilichonse.

Kenako ndinanena kuti sindikufuna. Pa nthawiyi ntchito yomwe ndinkagwira kukampaniyi inkandinyansa kwambiri moti sindinakayerekeza kuipitiriza. Sindinkafuna kukhalanso kapolo wa ndalama.

Ndinayesa kumufotokozera Arthur kuti moyo wanga wasintha tsopano, pamene Braden Chance analowa m'chipindachi n'kukhala patebulo lina lomwe linali pafupi ndi pomwe tinakhala. Poyamba sankandiona, koma kenako ndinaona akundiyang'ana mwachidwi.

"Uli bwanji, Braden," ndinatero mokweza.

Arthur anatembenuka kuti aone munthu amene ndinkayankhula naye.

"Mumadziwana?" anandifunsa chapansipansi.

"Tinakumana tsiku linalake," ndinatero.

"Munthu ameneyu ndi chitsiru chotheratu," anatero Arthur monong'ona. Mawu amenewa ndi omwenso legal assistant uja anagwiritsa ntchito pofotokoza za Chance.

Nditabwerera ku ofesi yanga, ndinapeza mafailo awiri ali padesiki yanga. Mufailo yoyamba munali ndandanda ya maina omwe pamwamba pake panalembedwa kuti "Othamangitsidwa M'nyumba Zomwe Ankakhala: RiverOaks." Pa nambala 4 pa ndandandawu panali DeVon

Hardy ndipo pa nambala 10 panali Lontae Burton ndi ana ake atatu.

Ndinakhala kaye phe kwa 2 kapena 3 minitsi. Ndi ndani amene anaika mafailo amenewo padesiki yanga? Pansi pa tsamba la maina lija munthu wina analemba ndi pensulo kuti, Anathamangitsidwa mopanda chilungamo.

Ndinatsegula failo yachiwiri. M'failoyo munali makiyi awiri komanso kapepala. Kapepalako kanalembedwa kuti:

"Kiyi ali pamwambayo ndi wa mu ofesi ya Chance. Kiyi ali pansiyo amatsegula mukabati yomwe ili pafupi ndi windo."

Ndinasunga mafailowo pabwino. Ndinkafunika kufufuza zambiri. Ndinkafunikanso kugwira ntchito ndi palanchi pomwe.

Kugwira ntchito palanchi kunkatanthauza kuti kasitomala wanga andilipira pa nthawiyo. Koma pa nthawiyi malamulo ankaoneka kuti ndi osathandiza komanso obowa. Ndinagwira ntchitoyo chifukwa ndinkadziwa kuti ndi tsiku langa lomaliza ku Drake & Sweeney.

Nthawi itatsala pang'ono kukwana 5 koloko mpamene ndinapeza mwayi wokhala ndekha. Ndinamutsanzika Polly n'kudzikiyira mu ofesi yanga. Ndinatulutsanso mafailo aja n'kuyamba kuganiza kwinaku ndikulemba timanotsi.

Ndinayamba kuganizira kuti ndi ndani amene waika mafailowo padesiki yanga. Kenako m'mutu mwanga munabwera legal assistant yemwe ananena kuti Chance ndi chitsiru uja. Legal assistant ndi amene ankaona nkhani ngati zimenezi ndipo unali udindo wawo kusonkhanitsa zonse zomwe zalembedwa pa nkhaniyo n'kuziika mufailo.

Ndinaimbira legal assistant wina n'kumufunsa kuti dzina la legal assistant wa Chance ndi ndani.

Dzina lake linali Hector Palma. Iye anali atagwira ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney kwa zaka pafupifupi zitatu ndipo ntchito yake inali yoona zogula komanso kugulitsa nyumba.

Tinakumana palaibulale munsanjika yachitatu. Hector Palma ankaoneka wamantha kwambiri.

“Kodi ndiwe amene unaika mafailo aja padesiki yanga?” ndinamufunsa. Panalibe nthawi yochita zamasewera.

“Mafailo ake ati?” Anatero akuyendetsayendetsa maso ake m’chipindacho. Ankayang’ana chilichonse kupatulapo ine.

“Mafailo okhudza anthu amene anathamangitsidwa m’nyumba yomwe ankakhala ndi kampani ya RiverOaks. Unalipo pamene zimenezi zinkachitika, eti?”

“Inde,” anatero.

“M’mafailo a RiverOaks muli zotani?”

“Muli zosakhala bwino.”

“Ungandibenthulireko?”

“Ndili ndi mkazi komanso ana omwe amadalira ine. Sindikufuna kuchita chilichonse chomwe chingachititse kuti ndichotsedwe ntchito.”

“Osadandaula, suchotsedwa ntchito.”

“Komatu ndamva zoti iweyo ukusiya ntchito. Ngakhale utapalamula palibe chimene chingakuchitikire.”

Sindinadabwe kuti ankadziwa zoti ndikuchoka. Anthu apakampaniyi anali apakamwa. Aliyense ayenera ankakamba za ine.

“Ndiye n’chiyani chinakuchititsa kuti usiye uthenga umene uja padesiki yanga? Umaganiza kuti ndingakalowe mu ofesi ya Chance n’kukatenga failo ndisanadziwe kuti mufailoyo munalembedwa zotani?”

“Chita zimene ukufuna.”

Anatuluka mulaibulaleyo n'kumapita.

Ndinabwerera ku ofesi yanga n'kukalemba timanotsi tina ndi tina. Ndinkadziwa kuti zikhoza kundisokonekera ngati nditagwidwa ndikutenga failo muofesi ya mwiniwake. Koma limeneli linali tsiku langa lomaliza kugwira ntchito pakampaniyi. Komabe ndinkadziwa kuti zingaipe kwambiri ngati nditagwidwa mu ofesi ya Chance ndili ndi makiyi omwe si anga. Sindinkafuna zimenezi zitachitika ngakhale pang'ono.

Vuto linanso linali kukopera failoyo. Mafailo a ku Drake & Sweeney ankakhala onenepa ndi mapepala. Choncho ndinkafunika kuima patsogolo pa mashini yopangira fotokope kwa nthawi yaitali kwambiri.

Komanso mashini opangira fotokope apakampaniyi amakhala ndi makadi apulasitiki omwe amakhala ndi mayina athu. Choncho kampani ikanadziwa munthu weniweni amene wapanga fotokope failo inayake.

Komabe ndikanatha kukachita fotokope failoyo malo ena. Komanso unali mlandu kutulutsa failo m'nyumba ya Drake & Sweeney. Ndiponso ndinali loya.

Koma kodi sindingangobwereka failoyo? Ndinkangoifuna kwa 30 minitsi basi kuti ndikaipange fotokope. Ndikanatha kupita ku 14th Street Law Center, kukaipanga fotokope, kenako n'kuibweretsanso mofulumira. Zimenezo zikanachititsa kuti ndisavale dzina la munthu wakuba.

Tsopano nthawi inali itapita, pa tsikuli lomwe linali Lachisanu. Ndinkayenera kukayamba ntchito kwa Mordecai Lolemba. Mwayi wanga wopeza failoyo unali umenewu basi. Mwatsoka ndinalibe kiyi woti ndikalowere ku 14th Street Law Center.

Ndinayang'ana wotchi yanga. Nthawi inali 6:30. Ndinayendetsa galimoto yanga kupita ku 14th Street.

Mwamayi ndinapeza anthu akugwirabe ntchito.

Sofia anandimwetulira, koma kwa timasekondi tochepa tokha.

“Takulandira kuno kuntchito kwako kwatsopano,” anatero Mordecai akuoneka mwasiliyasi ngati akundiuza kuti ndikufunikira kusonkhanitsa mwayi wonse wapadziko lapansi kuti ndigwire ntchito kumeneku. “Ofesi yako ndi iyi,” anatero akuloza ofesi yomwe ndinkayenera kumagwiriramo ntchito yanga. “Ofesi imeneyi ndi yabwino kwambiri m’nyumba yonsei ino.”

“Ndi yabwinodi,” ndinatero ndikulowa mu ofesiyo. Ofesi yanga yatsopanoyi inali hafu chabe ndikaiyerekezera ndi imene ndinali nayo ku Drake & Sweeney. Ngakhale desiki yomwe inali mu ofesi yanga kumeneko inali yoti singakwane italowa muofesi yatsopanoyi.

Munalibenso foni.

“Ndaikonda ofesiyi,” ndinatero. Ndipo ndinaikondadi.

“Ndikupezera foni yako m’mawa laliwisiri,” anatero Mordecai.

Unali usiku kwambiri moti Sofia anatsanzika kuti akupita. Ine ndi Mordecai tinadya masangweji amene iyeyo anabweretsa. Mordecai anapanganso khofi woti timwe. Ndinaponya maso pamene panali mashini opangira fotokope ndipo ndinaona kuti ndi yakale kwambiri. Koma mmene inkaonekera, zinali zosachita kufunsa kuti imagwira ntchito.

“Uweruka nthawi yanji lero?” ndinamufunsa Mordecai m’kamwa mwanga mutadzaza chigawo cha sangweji yomwe ndinaluma.

“Sindikudziwa. Mwina pambuyo pa 1 awa kapena. Wafunsiranji?”

“Ndibwereranso ku Drake & Sweeney kwa maola

angapo. Pali ntchito inayake imene andiuza kuti ndimalizitse. Ndiye ndimafuna nditabweranso kunoko. N'zotheka?"

Mordecai anapitiriza kudya sangweji wake. Kenako anayendetsa dzanja lake pakabati ina ndipo anandiponyera makiyi.

"Ukhoza kumabwera kuno nthawi iliyonse imene ikufuna," anatero.

"Kodi kunoko chitetezo ndi champhamvuko, eti?"

"Ayi. Ofunika kumasamala. Galimoto yako uziimitsa pafupi kwambiri ndi khomo loloweralo. Ukatulukamo uziyenda mofulumira. Kenako ukafika muno uzikhoma chitseko."

Ndinatuluka mu ofesiyo ndikuyenda mofulumira n'kupita pamene ndinaimika galimoto yanga. Nthawi inali cha m'ma hafu 7. Mumsewu munangoti zii. Koma galimoto yanga inali idakali bwinobwino. Popeza anthu kunalibe, ndinkaona kuti sindikumana ndi anthu omwe angandichite chipongwe.

Ndinayenda 11 minitsi yokha n'kukafika ku Drake & Sweeney. Ngati ndikanatenga 30 minitsi ndikupanga fotokope failo ya Chance ija, ndiye kuti ikanakhala kunja kwa ofesi nthawi yosaposa 1 awa. Ndipo mwiniwakeyo sakanadziwa zoti ndinatenga failo yake.

Anthu anali atapita m'makwawo. Choncho ndinagogoda pakhomo la Chance. Palibe amene anayankha. Ndinagwiritsa ntchito kiyi woyamba ndinapeza padesiki yanga uja n'kulowa. Kodi ndiyatse magetsi? M'katimo munali m'dima. Ndinaona kuti ndiyatse. Ndinakhomanso chitseko n'kuyatsa magetsi. Kenako ndinapita pakabati yomwe inali pafupi ndi windo n'kuitsegula pogwiritsa ntchito kiyi wachiwiri uja.

Ndinapeza failo ya RiverOaks. Pamene ndinkaya-

mba kuiwerenga ndinamva mawu panja pa ofesiyo. Wina ankakuwira mnzake ndipo ine ndinalumpha n'kubisala. Anthuwo anaima pafupi ndi ofesiyo n'kumakambirana za mpira. Ndinazimitsa magetsi aja n'kumamvetsera zimene ankakambirana. Kenako ndinakhala pampando wa Chance kwa 10 minitsi.

Ndikanatha kubwezeretsa failoyo m'kabati muja. Ngati akanandiona ndikutuluka mu ofesi ya Chance, palibe mlandu umene ndikanaimbidwa. Ubwino wake linali tsiku langa lomaliza. Koma ngati akanandiona nditanyamula failo, nkhani ikanaipa.

"Dekha," ndinadziuza choncho. Atamaliza kukambirana za mpira zija anayamba kukamba za akazi. Ndikuganiza kuti anali ma legal assistants achinyamata omwe ankagwira ovataimu. Kenako ndinangomva zii.

Ndinayang'ana kabati ija mumdima, kupotokola kiyi n'kutuluka panja. "Heyi!" anakuwa wina kumbuyo kwanga. Ndinadzidzimuka kwambiri moti ndinayamba kuthawa. Ndinatulukira chitseko chakuseri n'kukwera mugalimoto yanga. Kenako ndinalowetsa mwendo wanga m'mafuta. "Ndachita zopusa kwabasi," ndinatero mumtima. "Nanga ndimathawa chifukwa chiyani? N'chifukwa chiyani sindinalimbe mtima n'kuyankhula naye?" Munthune ndinali woti ndikugwirabe ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney, si choncho?

Ndikuganizira zimenezi ndinangozindikira ndawombana ndi galimoto ya Jaguar yomwe inkayenda mothamanga kwambiri 18th Street.

Pamene ndinkayambanso kuzindikira ndinamva wina akunena kuti, "Palibe pamene akutuluka magazi." Kenako ndinaona Claire atakhala pambali pa bedi lomwe ndinagona m'chipatala cha George Washington University Medical Center.

8

Ndinadzuka cha m'ma 7 koloko m'mawa ndipo nesi anandipatsa kapepala komwe Claire anamuuza kuti andipatsire. Kanali kapepala kodzaza ndi mawu okoma. Ankanditsanzika kuti wapita kukagwira ntchito. Ananenanso kuti wayankhulana ndi madokotala omwe amandisamalira ndipo amutsimikizira kuti sindimwalira. Ine ndi Claire tinkafunika kusonyeza manesi ndi madokotala kuti banja lathu ndi likuyenda bwino ndipo ndi losangalala. Koma nanga n'chifukwa chiyani tinkalithetsa?

Dzanja langa lamanzere linkaoneka labuluu. M'chifuwa mwanga munkapweteka ndikamapuma. Ndinayang'ana nkhope yanga pagalasi lomwe linali kutoileti ndipo ndinaona kuti ndinali ndi timabala pankhope yanga. Timabala take sitinali todetsa nkhawa moti m'timasiku tingapo tonse tikanazimiririka. Nesi uja anandiuza kuti m'galimoto ya Jaguar munali gulu la zigawenga zomwe zimagulitsa madiragi. "Takulandira kumoyo watsopano," ndinadziuza mumtima mwanga pamene ndinkayesetsa kuti ndisamapume mwamphamvu kwambiri kuti ndisamve kupweteka m'chifuwa.

Dokotala anabwera cha m'ma hafu 7. Atandiunika anapeza kuti palibe fupa langa limene lathyoka.

Ankafuna kuti ndikhalenso m'chipatala tsiku lina kuti andionerere, koma ine ndinawauza kuti ndikachirira kunyumba.

Ndinkafunika kupeza nyumba yoti ndizikhala. Nditapita kwa anthu ofufuza nyumba zalendi anandiuza kuti nyumba ilipo ku Adams-Morgan, chakumpoto kwa Dupont Circle. Nyumbayo inali pamwamba pa nyumba ina ndipo inali ndi zipinda zing'onozing'ono zitatu. Kubafa zonse zinalipo ndipo zinkagwira ntchito bwinobwino, fulowo yake inalinso yabwino. Ukayang'ana panja unkatha kuona zomwe zikuchitika mumsewu. Nyumbayi inandisangalatsa moti ndinawauza kuti ndilowamo.

Madzulo umenewo ndinabwerera kumene ndinkakhala kuja kuti ndikaonane ndi Claire. Tinadyera limodzi chomwe tinagula palesitilanti ina. Izi ndi zomwe zinachitikanso pa tsiku limene tinakwatirana ndipo tinatsanzikananso komaliza monga munthu ndi mkazi wake mwa kudyeranso limodzi chakudya chogula kulesitilanti. Claire anali atalemba kale mapepala othetsa banja ndipo anawaika patebulo kuti nanenso nditikitire. Ndinatikitiradi. Pambuyo pa miyezi 6 titapereka mapepelawo kuboma, ndinali woti ndikhalanso munthu wa singo.

"Kodi umamudziwa Hector Palma?" anandifunsa, tili m'katikati modya chakudya chija.

Zimenezi zinandidabwitsa kwambiri.

"Inde," ndinatero.

"Anaimba. Amati akufuna atayankhula nawe. Ndi ndani?"

"Ndi legal assistant wa ku Drake & Sweeney. Akufuna ndimutandize zinazake. Pali vuto lina limene wakumana nalo."

"Vuto lake layenera kukhala lalikulutu. Anasiya uthenga woti mukakumane 9 koloko usiku ku Nathan ku M Street."

"N'chifukwa chiyani akufuna tikakumane kubala?" ndinatero hafu ndikukhala ngati ndikudziyankhulira nde-

kha, hafu inayo n'kumakhala ngati ndikuyankhula ndi Claire.

"Sanafotokoze chifukwa chake. Mmene ndimayankhula naye amachita zinthu mwachilendo kwambiri."

Mwadzidzidzi, njala yanga inatha. Ndinapitirizabe kudya chifukwa sindinkafuna kuoneka kuti ndikuda nkhawa pamaso pa Claire. Koma zimene ndinachitazi zinali zopanda ntchito. Claire analibe nane ntchito.

Ndinanyamuka n'kupita ku M Street. Ndinayenda wapansi chifukwa likakhala Loweruka madzulo, malo oimika galimoto amasowa mbali yakumeneko.

Mvula inkagwa ndipo ndikamapuma m'chifuwa mwanga munkapweteka. Pamene ndinkayenda, ndinkaganizira zomwe ndingakanene. Ndinkasanja mabodza oti ndikamubwatike nawo. Kungochokera pamene nditatenga failo ija, zinayamba kukhala zosavuta kwa ine kunena bodza. Ndinkaona kuti mwina Hector watumidwa ndi kampani ya Drake & Sweeney. Ndinkaganiza kuti akufuna kudaba zonse zomwe ndingakanene. Choncho ndinaona kuti ndikasamale ndi zoyankhula zanga. Ndinkafunika kumakamumvetsera mwatcheru n'kumakayankhula mosinira mawu.

Bala ya Nathan inali yosadzaza kwambiri. Ndinafika mofulumira ndi 10 minitsi koma ndinapeza Hector atafika kale. Iye ankandidikirira patebulo ina yomwe inali chakukona. Pamene ndinkalowa, iye anaimirira n'kuimika dzanja.

"Ndiye Michael, si choncho? Ndine Hector Palma wa ku real estate. Ndasangalala kuti takumananso."

Ee? Si paja tinakumana ku laibulale?

Tinakhala pansi. Iye anandiponda phazi pansi patebulo. Ndinamvetsa chimene chinkachitika. Analidi atamuveka chodaba mawu ndipo nawonso anali momwemo

n'kumaona zimene tikuchita. Kenako weta anabwera patebulo lathu. Ndinamuuza kuti andipatse khofi ndipo Hector anaitanitsa mowa.

"Ndine legal assistant wa ku real estate," anatero Hector pamene weta uja ankaika zomwe tinaitanitsa zija patebulo. "Kodi unakumanapo ndi Braden Chance, patina yemwe amagwira ntchito kukampani yathu?"

"Inde," ndinatero. Popeza ndinkadziwa kuti akudaba mawu anga, ndinatsimikizira mtima kumangoyankha mwachidule kwambiri.

"Ineyo ndi amene ndimagwira naye ntchito kwambiri. Mlungu watha munabwera ku ofesi kwathu ndipo ine ndinakulozerani ofesi yake."

"Owo! Sindikukumbukira ndikukuonani."

Anamwetulira ndipo nanenso ndinamumenya ndi phazi pansi patebulo paja. Aliyense anamvetsa chimene chinkachitika tsopano.

"Ndinakupemphani kuti tikumane chifukwa failo ina yasowa mu ofesi ya Braden."

"Ndiye mukuganiza kuti ndatenga failoyo ndi ineyo?"

"Sindinatero, koma zikhoza kutheka kuti mwatenga ndi inuyo. Ndikuganiza choncho chifukwa munatchula za failo pamene munandifunsa kuti ofesi ya Braden ndi iti mlungu watha uja."

"Ngati mukuona kuti ndatenga failoyo ndine, bwanji osapita kupolisi?" ndinatero mokwiya.

Hector Palma anapyontha mowa wake uja.

"Kampani ya Drake & Sweeney yakatula kale nkhaniyi kupolisi," anatero. "Apolisi anapeza failo yopanda kanthu mu ofesi yanu komanso kapepala konena za makiyi awiri. M'modzi wotsegulira pakhomo, wina wotsegulira m'kabati. Anapezanso madindo a zala anu pakabatiyo."

Ndinali ndisanaganizire zoti angagwiritse ntchito madindo a zala. Ndinakumbukira kuti ku Drake & Sweeney amatenga madindo a zala za munthu aliyense pa tsiku limene wayamba ntchito. Koma zimenezi zinachitika zaka 5 zapitazo ndipo ndinali nditaiwaliratu.

"Tikufunani tsiku lina kuti tidzakambirane bwino-bwino nkhaniyi," anatero Hector Palma. Ndinatenga chijasi changa n'kunyamuka kumapita.

Tsiku loyamba kugwira ntchito ku 14th Street Law Center linathera kofunafuna failo ija. Tinapita kukaiyang'ana m'galimoto yanga ija yomwe inali itaphwanyikiratu. Mordecai ndi amene anandithandiza kuchita zimenezi. Tinkafunika kupita ku Georgia Avenue, okmwe apolisi ankasunga magalimoto omwe achita ngozi. Ndinamuuza Mordecai kuti failoyo ndi yofunika kwambiri, koma sindinamuuze kuti muli nkhani yotani.

Nditafika kunyumba yomwe ndinasamukira ija, ndinayamba kuwerenga zomwe zinali mufailoyo. River-Oaks inali kampani yogula komanso kugulitsa nyumba. Kampaniyi inkafuna kumanga nyumba yatsopano yoti a Washington Post Office azidzachitamo lendi. Choncho anagula chinyumba chimene DeVon Hardy ndi Lontae Burton ankakhala ndipo ankafuna kugumula chinyumbacho kuti amange chinyumba china chatsopano.

Zikuoneka kuti anali pachangu. Ankafuna kuyamba kugwetsa chinyumbacho mu February. Ndiye pa 27 January, Hector Palma anapita kukayendera chinyumbacho. Mfundo zimene analemba pa ulendo umenewo zinali pa ndandanda wa mapepala omwe ankayenera kupezeka mufailo ija. Koma pepalalo munalibe. Winawake ayenera analichotsamo ndipo sindikukayikira kuti analichotsamo ndi Chance. N'kutheka kuti anachita zimenezi atangomva zoti bambo wina wamfuti watsekera maloya m'chipinda

chopangira misonkhano.

Lachisanu, pa 31 January, Hector Palma anapitanso kuchinyumba kuja ndi apolisi ndipo anathamangitsa anthu onse omwe ankakhala mmenemo. Ntchito yothamangitsa anthuyi inachitika kwa maola atatu.

Zomwe Hector Palama analemba zinali zodzaza mapeji awiri. Ngakhale anayesetsa kubisa mmene ankamvera mumtima, zinali zoonekeratu kuti sankagwirizana ndi zothamangitsa anthuwo.

Iye anafotokoza nkhondo imene inalipo pamene apolisi ankatulutsa m'chinyumbamo Lontae Burton.

Mtima wanga unadumpha pamene ndinawerenga kuti: Mayiyo anali ndi ana atatu ndipo wina anali wam'manja. Amakhala m'chigawo chomwe chinali ndi zipinda zitatu, koma zopanda bafa ndi chimbudzi. Amagona pansi. Mayiyo anamenyana ndi apolisi ana ake akuonerera. Pamapeto pake anachita kunyamulidwa n'kukaponyedwa panja.

Ndinakwera galimoto yanga n'kupita ku 14th Street n'kukapanga fotokope failoyo. Kenako ndinabwerera kumene ndinkhala poyamba kuja.

Claire anali adakali kuntchito. Ndinatenga zofunda zanga, masuti angapo, wailesi, ka TV kakang'ono komwe kanali kukhitchini, wailesi yanga yoika ma CD komanso ma CD angapo, chopangira khofi, choumitsira tsitsi komanso matawelo abuluu atatu.

Ndinasiya kapepala komwe ndinalembapo mawu omutsanzika Claire kuti ndapita. Sindingafotokoze mmene ndinkamvera. Ndinali ndisanachitepo zangati zimenezi. Sindinkadziwa zimene munthu amayenera kuchita. Pamene ndinkachoka kunyumbako, sindinkasangalala kuti tsopano ndikhalanso singo. Aliyense wa ife anali atataya zambiri.

Nditabwerera ku 14th Street Law Center, mlendo wanga woyamba anali mnzanga wina wakalekale dzina lake Barry Nuzzo. Anakhala pansi mosamala pampando womwe unali padesiki yomwe inali patsogolo pa desiki yanga. Anachita zimenezi chifukwa sankafuna kudetsa suti yake yodula.

Kodi nayenso anali atatenga chodabira mawu ngati Hector Palma?

Ndinkaona kuti mwina atumiza Barry chifukwa choti ndi mnzanga, komanso chifukwa choti tinagwidwira limodzi ndi bambo anaphedwa uja Lachiwiri mlungu wapitawo.

"Ndiye mwabwera kuno kuti muzilandira zambiri?" anatero. Ankangondiseleula.

"Inde."

"Iwetu ukungochita zinthu ngati wapenga. Anthu amene ajatu akutsata mpaka kuno. Sumayenera kutenga failo yawo."

"Ukutanthauza kuti anditsegulira mlandu wakuba?"

"Mwina. Koma ndamanso zoti akatula nkhani yakoyi ku ofesi yoona za maloya. Rafter ndi amene akuyendetsa zimenezo. Zimene akuyendetsazo zikangoyenda basi, uiwale za ntchito ya uloya. Akulanda laisensi yako."

Nkhani imeneyi inandidzidzimutsa.

"Ndinatengadi failo. Muli zinthu zambirimbiri zokhudza kampani ya Drake & Sweeney."

"Komatu usaiwale kuti sungagwiritse ntchito failo imeneyo, Michael. Sanakulole kuigwiritsa ntchito pamlandu chifukwa wachita kuiba."

Pakamwa panga panauma. Sindinkadziwa choti ndichite. Chomwe ndinkadziwa ndi choti sindingakabwezenso failoyo. Ndinalibe chida chinanso choti ndigwiritse ntchito polimbana ndi kampani ya Drake & Sweeney.

Barry anadzuka pamene anakhala kuti azinyamuka.

“Tiziyankhulanatu nthawi zina Michael, si choncho?” anatero akutuluka pakhomo.

“Tiziyankhulana.”

9

Nyumbayo inali shopu yaikulu yogulitsa zinthu zosiyana-siyana zaka zambiri zapitazo. Tsopano panali pataikidwa chikwangwani cholembedwa kuti, SAMARITAN HOUSE.

“Amenewa ndi malo othandizira anthu ovutika,” anatero Mordecai. “Kuli mabedi 90. Amapereka chakudya chabwino. Zimamveka kuti matchalitchi ena a ku Arlington amasonkha ndalama zomwe amalipirira chilichonse chomwe chimachitika pamalowa. Takhala tikubwera kuno kwa zaka 6.”

Titalowa, tinagwiritsa ntchito chipinda china ngati ofesi.

“Imeneyi ndi ofesi yabwino,” anatero Mordecai. “Zomwe tingamakambe muno ena sangazimve.”

“Nanga toileti ili kuti?” ndinafunsa.

“Ili kumapetoko. Kumalo othandiziratu anthu ovutika sikukhala toileti ya munthu m’modzi.”

Ndinkatha kumva anthu akumvetsera mawailesi. Anthu anali akudzuka tsopano. Linali Lolemba ndipo anthuwa ankafunika kupita kuntchito zawo.

“Kodi zimakhala zovuta kupeza chipinda choti uzikhala kunoko?” ndinamufunsa Mordecai ngakhale ndinkadziwa kale yankho lake.

“Penanso zimaoneka ngati zosatheka. Pali anthu ambirimbiri omwe analembetsa kuti akufuna chipinda

choti azikhala."

"Ndiye amakhala nthawi yaitali bwanji?"

"Mwina miyezi itatu. Malo anowa ndi amodzi a malo othandizira anthu ovutika omwe ndi abwino kwambiri. Anthuwa amakhala otetezeka akakhala kuno. Miyezi itatu ikamatha, amawathandiza kuti apeze nyumba zoti azikakhala."

"Ndiye anthu omwe timawaimira pamilandu onse amachokera kumalo othandizira anthu ovutika?" ndinafunsa.

"Hafu amachokera m'malo othandizira anthu ovutika," anatero Mordecai. "Ndipo hafu ina amachokera m'misewu."

"Timathandiza munthu aliyense amene wabwera?"

"Inde, aliyense amene akusowa pokhala. Anthu amene amakhala kuno amagwira ntchito, koma salandira ndalama zoti n'kupanga lendi nyumba yaikulu. Ndiye zimene zimachitika ndi zoti akapeza nyumba n'kulephera kulipira mwezi wina, amawathamangitsa ndipo amayambanso kukhala m'misewu kapena kumalo othandizira anthu ovutika."

Munthu woyambirira kumuthandiza anali mayi wina dzina lake Waylene. Anali ndi zaka 27, ana awiri koma analibe mwamuna.

Vuto lake silinali lalikulu kwambiri. Zikuoneka kuti ankagwira ntchito palesitilanti ina. Anayamba ndi kutilakatulira chifukwa chake anasiya ntchito, koma Mordecai ananena kuti zimenezo zilibe ntchito. Kenako ananena kuti sanapatsidwe malipiro a miyezi iwiri imene anagwira ntchito. Chifukwa choti analibe adiresi, macheke a ndalama zimene ankayenera kulandira chinatumizidwa kolakwika. Machekewo anali atasowa ndipo palibe amene ankasonyeza chidwi chomuthandiza kulesitilanti anka-

gwira ntchitoko.

"Ukhala uli kuno mpaka wiki yamawa?" anafunsa Mordecai.

Waylene anayankha mokayikira. Ankafufuza ntchito choncho anali woti akhoza kupezeka kuti wayamba kukhala ndi mnzake kapena kupanga lendi nyumba yake.

"Tikakutengera ndalama zako ndipo tikawauza kuti macheke ake atumize ku ofesi yathu," anatero Mordecai. Anamupatsa adiresi ya ku 14th Street Law Center. Waylene ananena kuti "zikomo" kenako ananyamuka n'kumapita.

"Uimbe foni kulesitilanti imene Waylene amagwira ntchito," anatero Mordecai kwa ine. "Uwauze kuti ndiwe loya wake. Uyambe ndi kuchita zinthu mowanyengerera. Akapanda kutumiza machekewo, uwaonetse mano. Ngati zitafunikira ukhozanso kupita komweko kukatenga machekewo."

Ndinalemba chilichonse chimene Mordecai ananena, ngati kuti zinali zovuta. Waylene ankayenera kulandira 210 dolazi. Munthu womaliza yemwe ndinkamuimira pamlandu ku Drake & Sweeney ankafuna kuti alipiridwe 900 miliyoni dolazi. Izo zili apo ndinachoka kuntchitoku ndili wosangalala kwambiri.

Nyumba yanga yatsopano ija inali ndi mipando inayake yakalekale ndipo TV ija ndinaiika pachibokosi chinachake. Ndinamwetulira nditaona zinthu zimenezi. Kenako mayi anga anaimba foni ine kulibe. Ndinamvetsera mawu awo pachipangizo chosunga zimene munthu wanena. Amayi ndi adadi ankafuna kubwera kudzandiona.

Madzulo umenewo ndinaonera basketball pa TV kwinaku ndikutsitsira ndi kamowa. Pamene nthawi inkakwana hafu 11, ndinamuimira Claire. Tinali tisanayankhulane kwa masiku 4. Nanga pali chifukwa chochititsa kuti

tisamayankhulane ngati? Ndipo mwamalamulo tinali tidakala anthu okwatirana. Ndinkaganiza kuti tsiku lina tikadyere limodzi chakudya chamadzulo.

Telefoni inaitana ndipo kenako ndinamva mawu akuti, "Halo?" Anali munthu wamwamuna. Ndinasowa choti ndinene. Panali patangotha mlungu umodzi chichokere kunyumba kwake. Koma tsopano Claire anali atayamba kale kubweretsa mwamuna m'nyumba mwake n'kukhala limodzi mpaka hafu 11. Ndinangotsala pang'ono kuidula, koma kenako ndinanena kuti, "Ndimafuna kuyankhulana ndi Claire, ali pafupi?"

"Ndinu ndani?"

"Michael, mwamuna wake."

"Akusamba," anatero. Anayankhula zimenezi modzimva kwambiri.

"Akatuluka kubafako mumuuza kuti ndinaimba," ndinatero.

Ndinkangozungulirazungulira m'nyumbamo mpaka pakati pa usiku. Kenako ndinatuluka kuti ndikawongoleko miyendo. N'chiyani chinachititsa kuti banja lathu lisokonekere? Kodi munthu amene Claire anamulowetsa m'nyumbayo anali ndani? Kodi Claire ankandizembera n'kumayenda ndi mwamuna wina?

Kenako ndinadziuza kuti zimenezo n'zopanda ntchito. Sitinkathetsa banja lathu chifukwa cha anthu ena. Tinkalithetsa chifukwa tinkakanika kukhalira limodzi. Ndipo ngati tsopano anali ndi ufulu wopezanso mwamuna wina, ndiye kuti inenso ndinali ndi ufulu wochita zomwezo. Ya, ndithu.

Pamene nthawi inkakwana 2 koloko m'bandakucha, ndinali ndikuyenda pafupi ndi Dupont Circle, ndikuponda miyendo ya anthu omwe ankagona mumsewu. Zimenezi zinali zoopsa kwambiri, koma ndinalibe nazo ntchito.

Nditatopa ndi kuyendayenda, ndinabwerera kunyumba kuti ndikagone. Kenako mtima wanga unayamba kufuna kugwira ntchito moti ndinapita ku 14th Street 8 nthawi yoyambira ntchito isanakwane.

Sinowo anali akugwa ndipo ndinayenda ndikulemba mapasi anga musinowo kwinaku ndikuganizira za anthu omwe ndinkawaimira milandu. Tsopano ndinali ndi anthu ochepa. Ndinali ndi Waylene ndi nkhani yake yoti sanapatsidwe malipiro a miyezi iwiri. Komanso ndinali ndi Marvis. Mofanana ndi ine, Marvis ankafuna kuthetsa banja lake chifukwa choti mkazi wake ankagwiritsa ntchito madiragi. Mkaziyo anali atatenga chilichonse chimene anali nacho, kuphatikizapo ana awo awiri. Marvis ankafuna kuti ana akewo abwerere kunyumba.

“Kodi zingatenge nthawi yaitali bwanji ndithetse banja langa?” anandifunsa Marvis.

“Miyezi 6,” ndinatero.

Marvis anali waukhondo, sankamwa mowa ndipo ankafufuza ntchito. Ndinasangalala kwambiri ndi 1 awa yomwe ndinacheza naye moti ndinkafunitsitsa kumuthandiza.

Munthu wina yemwe ndinkamuthandiza anali mayi wina wazaka 58. Mwamuna wake anali woti anamwalira ndipo boma linkatumiza ndalama yake kolakwika. Kumuthandizanso kunali kosavuta. Ndikanachita zofunikira kuti ndalamazo zipezeke, kenako n’kuwauza kuti amutumizire.

Anthu ambiri amene ndinkawathandiza anali ndi mavuto ngati amenewo. Sankapatsidwa ndalama zawo ndipo kawirikawiri limene linkachita zimenezi linali boma.

Pamene ndinkakafika ku ofesiko, ndinaona mayi wina wochepa thupi atakhala pakhomo lolowera. Ofesiyo

inali idakali yoloka. Panjapa pankazizira koopsa. Atangondiona, anaimirira n'kunena kuti, "Muli bwanji? Kodi ndinu loya?"

"Inde, ndine loya."

"Loya wa anthu ngati ineyo?"

Ankaoneka kuti alibe pokhala.

"Inde. Tiyeni tilowe m'katimu."

Ndinatsegula chitseko. M'katimo munkazizira kwambiri kuposa panja paja. Ndinapanga khofi n'kukatenga mabisiketi akalekale omwe anali penapake. Ndinamupatsa mayiyo ndipo posakhalitsa anatafuna m'modzi.

"Dzina lanu ndi ndani?" ndinafunsa. Tinali titakhala pafupi ndi desiki ya Sofia tikudikira kuti khofi ndinkapanga uja atenthe.

"Ruby," anatero.

"Ine ndi Michael. Mumakhala kuti a Ruby?"

"Malo osiyanasiyana."

Ayenera anali ndi zaka zapakati pa 30 ndi 40 ndipo anavala zovala zambirimbiri zakutha. Anali wochepa thupi kwambiri.

"Ndiye, ndiuzeni vuto lanu," ndinatero. "Mumakhala m'malo othandizira anthu ovutika?"

"Ayi," anatero. "Ndimakhala m'galimoto. Ndimagona kumbuyo kwa galimotoyo."

Ndinapungulira khofi uja m'kapu yapepala ndipo tinapita ku ofesi yanga.

"Ndiye mukufuna ndikuthandizeni bwanji?" ndinafunsa.

Atagwira kapu ya khofi ija ndi manja onse awiri kuti azimva kutentha, anayamba kufotokoza nkhani yake. Pa nthawi yonseyi sankandiyang'ana. Mayiyu ndi mwana wake, Terence, ankakhala m'nyumba ina yaing'ono. Ndiye Terence ali ndi zaka pafupifupi 10, mayiyu anamangi-

dwa kwa miyezi 4 atagwidwa akugulitsa madiragi.

Pa nthawi imeneyo, Terence ankasungidwa ndi mchemwali wake. Koma Ruby atatuluka kundendeko, anapeza kuti nyumba yake ija inaperekedwa kwa anthu ena. Choncho iyeyo ndi Terance anayamba kugona m'magalimoto, nyuma zosungiramo katundu komanso pansi pa mabuliji. Kunja kukamazizira kwambiri, ankapita kumalo othandizira anthu ovutika. Pa nthawi yonseyi, Ruby ankalephera kusiya kugwiritsa ntchito madiragi.

Zaka zingapo zapitazo, Ruby ankagwira ntchito kunyumba kwa a Rowlands. Ana am'banjali anali atachoka pakhomo. Ruby anapempha banjali kuti azilipira banjali 50 dolazi pamwezi ngati atalola kumakhala ndi Terance. Poyamba banjalo linkakaikira, koma kenako linagwirizana nazo.

Terance anapatsidwa kachipinda kakang'ono kunyumba kwa a Rowlands. Chifukwa choti ankagona bwinobwino, anayamba kuchita bwino kusukulu. A Rowlands anali anthu abwino. Ankalola kuti Ruby azipita kukamuona Terence kwa 1 awa madzulo alionse. Movutikira kambiri Ruby anakwanitsa kupereka ndalama analonjeza ija monga mwa pangano. Iye ankasangalala kwambiri kuti akuchita zonse zomwe angathe.

Koma kenako anamangidwanso. Vuto lake linali lakuti ankalephera kusiya kugwiritsa ntchito madiragi. Zimenezi zinakwiyitsa Terance kwambiri moti sankafunanso kuyankhula ndi mayi akewo. Ankafuna kukalembetsa usilikali, Mr. Rowlands poyamba anali msilikali.

Ndiye atamasulidwa, Ruby anamwa madiragi. Kenako anapita kunyumba kwa a Rowlands. Kumeneko anayamba kulalata komanso kuchita zosokoneza moti a Rowlands ndi Terence anamugwira n'kukamuponyera panja.

Tsiku lotsatira a Rowlands anapita kukhoti. Ankafuna kuti Terance akhale mwana wawo. Ruby analetsedwa kuti asadzapitenso kunyumba kwawo mpaka atasiya kugwiritsa ntchito madiragi.

“Ndikufuna kuonana ndi mwana wanga,” anatero Ruby. “Ndamusowa kwambiri.”

“Sizingatheke kuti muonane ndi mwana wanu pokhapokha mutasiya kugwiritsa ntchito madiragi,” ndinatero, ndikuyesetsa kuyankhula mwaulemu. Vuto lalikulu la mayiyu linali limeneli ndipo ndinkafunika kupeza njira yomuthandiza kuti asiye madiragi.

Sofia ankadziwa kumene Ruby angathandizidwe bwino. Sofia ankadziwa chilichonse komanso ankadziwana ndi munthu aliyense. Anaimbira foni kwinakwake ndipo posakhalitsa anaiuza kuti tipite ku Naomi’s Women’s Chenter ku 10th Street. Malowa ankatsegulidwa 7 koloko m’mawa n’kutsekedwa 4 koloko chakumadzulo. Maola apakatipa ankathandiza azimayi omwe anali ndi vuto logwiritsa ntchito madiragi.

Ndinayankhula ndi Megan, mtsikana wina yemwe ankayang’anira malowo. Tinakambirana kwa nthawi yaitali.

Patadutsa nthawi yaitali kwambiri, aka kanali koyamba kuti ndiyankhule ndi munthu kwa nthawi yaitali chonchi.

10

Ndinkagona pasimenti kunyumba yanga yatsopano ija. Ndinkakonda kugona pansi chifukwa zinkandithandiza kuti ndiziwamvetsa anthu amene ndinkawathandiza. Pakati pa usiku, telephoni inalira. Anali Claire. Kunyumba kwake kunali kutabwera apolisi. Apolisiwo anapita kuti akafufuze m'nyumbamo failo ija. Ndinayang'ana wotchi yanga. Nthawi inali 1 koloko usiku.

"Ndikubwera komweko."

Chitseko chinali chotsegula ndipo ndinangofikira kulowa. Anali apolisi atatu ndipo ndinayamba kuyankhula mokweza kwa wapolisi amene anali pafupi nane.

"Dzina langa ndi Michael Brock. Inu ndi ndani?"

"Lieutenant Gasko," anatero wapolisiyo ataipitsa nkhope.

"Clair," ndinakuwa. "Tenga kamera ya vidiyo. Mlandu umenewu ukafika kukhoti, Lieutenant Gasko."

Lieutenant Gasko anandionetsa pepala linalake. "Pepalalali lasainidwa ndi jaji," anatero. "Ndipo apa akunena kuti tikhoza kubwera kuno kudzafufuza failo yomwe inasowa kumene munkagwira ntchito." Lieutenant Gasko ankadziwa kuti ndine loya moti nkhope yake inkaoneka yosasangalala.

"Failoyo sili kuno chifukwa ineyo sindikhala kuno," ndinatero. "Ndiye ndipatseni mayina anu, kenako muzipita."

Claire anali akujambula zomwe zinkachitika. Pepala ankanena kuti lasainidwa ndi jaji lija linali lovomerezeka ndithu. Ndinkadziwa zimenezo. Koma apolisi atatuwo anandipatsa maina aow ndipo kenako ananyamuka n'kumapita.

"Akhoza kubweranso, eti?" anafunsa Claire.

"Ayi."

"Bola pamenepo."

"Wawauza kumene ndimakhala?" ndinamufunsa Claire.

"Inetu sindidziwa kumene umakhala. Usaiwaletu kuti unangondipatsa ndamala yokha basi."

Kenako ndinamutsanzika popanda kumugwira kapena kumukisa. Ndinkadziwa kuti zimenezo ndi zimene akufuna.

Nditaganiza mwakuya ndinaona kuti ndikufunika kumuuza Mordecai nkhani yonse. Ndinkaona kuti apolisi aja akhozanso kupita ku ofesi kuja kuti akayang'ana failo ija.

M'mawa wa tsiku lotsatira ndinayesa kumuimbira Hector Palma ndili ku ofesi kuja. Sekeletale wake ananena kuti wasamuka ku ofesi ya ku Washington. Atangondiuza zimenezi, ndinadula foniyo. Ndipange bwanji pamenepa? Ndinayamba kuyang'ana kusiling'i.

Mordecai analowa mu ofesi yanga ndipo ndinayamba kumufotokozera nkhani ija.

"Banja langa latha moti tsopano ndapanga lendi nyumba ina komwe ndikukhala."

"Napepe," anatero Mordecai. Nanga adakanenanso kuti chiyani?

"Si zodetsa nkhawa. M'mawa wa lero, apolisi anapita kunyumba kumene ndinkakhala kuti akafufuze failo yomwe ndinatenga pamene ndinkachoka ku Drake &

Sweeney."

"Failo ya chani?"

"Failo ya DeVon Hardy ndi Lontae Burton."

"Ndikumvetsera."

"Ndikuganiza kuti DeVon Hardy ndi Lontae Burton anali alendi. Ndiye ngati anali alendi, ndiye kuti kuwathamangitsa m'nyumba kunachitika kuja kunali kuphwanya malamulo."

"Inenso ndimaona choncho. Simungathamangitse walendi m'nyumba yomwe amakhala popanda kumuchenjeza kukadali nthawi kuti akafune kwina kokhala. Koma kodi ndi mmenedi zilili kapena kapena ukungopenekera?"

Ndinafotokozera Mordecai zokhudza failo ya RiverOaks. Ndinamuuza kuti pepala la zomwe zinalembedwa pa 27 January linachotsedwa mu failoyo ndi winawake.

"Ndiye ukuganiza kuti papepalalo panalembedwa zotani?" anafunsa.

"Sindikudziwa. Koma ndikuganiza kuti ndi zimene Hector Palma analemba pamene anthuwo ankathamangitsidwa. Ndikuganiza kuti ankadziwa zoti anthuwo ndi alendi ndipo analemba zimenezo papepalalo. Koma zikuoneka kuti kampani ya RiverOaks inkafuna kuti anthuwo achoke mwachangu n'cholinga choti agwetsepo chinyumba chimene anthuwo ankakhalacho. Ankafuna kuyamba kumanga ntchito yomanga Post Office mu February. Ndikuganizakuti zimene Hector Palma analemba zokhudza zimene zinachitika pa 27 January zimene zinachotsedwa mu failo ya Drake & Sweeney ndi umboni wakuti DeVon Hardy ndi Lontae Burton komanso anthu ena anali alendi."

"Pamenepotu zili bwino," anatero Mordecai. "Apa ndiye kuti tikhoza kuyamba mlandu wa Lontae Burton ndi banja lake komanso anthu ena amene anathamangitsidwa

malo amene ankakhala mopanda chilungamo.”

“Inde,” ndinatero. “Hector Palma akungofunika kukauza jaji zimene akudziwa zokhudza nkhaniyi basi.”

“Ndiwadziwitsa nkhani imeneyi makolo a Lontae Burton,” anatero Mordecai. “Amenewo ndi amene tiwaimire pa mlandu umenewu.”

“Makolo ake anamwalira. Koma agogo ake adakali moyo.”

“Chabwino. Tilumikizana ndi agogowo. Koma choyamba tikufunika kupeza Hector Palma.”

“Ndikuganiza kuti kampani ya Drake & Sweeney singamuchotse ntchito. Sangachite zimenezo akudziwa kuti akangotero atsegula pakamwa pake. Koma chomwe angachite ndi kungomuchotsa ku ofesi ya ku Washington. Ndikuganiza kuti akugwirabe ntchito kukampaniyi mumzinda winawake. Mwinanso amukwezera malipiro.”

“Sofia!” anakuwa Mordecai mokweza kwambiri moti ngakhale anthu amene anali ku Capitol Hill anamumva. “Sofia, tikufuna utithandize kupeza munthu winawake.”

Sofia anatulukira pepala ndi pensulo zili m’manja.

“Ndikudziwa,” anatero. “Ndamva zimene mumakambirana.”

Kenako anatembenukira kwa ine.

“Ndikhoza kukuthandizani kupeza munthu ameneyo. Ingondiuzani chilichonse chokhudza munthuyo.”

Ndinamuuza kuti dzina la munthuyo ndi Hector Palma. Ndinamuzanso adiresi yake komanso ntchito yomwe amagwira. Ndinafotokoza mmene amaonekera komanso ndinanena kuti ali ndi mkazi komanso ana 4.

“Zaka?”

“Mwina 30.”

“Ankalandira ndalama zingati ku Drake &

Sweeney?"

"Monga legal assistant? 3 sauzande."

"Ali ndi ana 4, choncho m'modzi kapena angapo ayenera amapita kusukulu. Sangatumize ana ake onse kusukulu yolipira ndi ndalama imene amalandirayo. Ndiyamba ndi kufufuza m'masukulu. Kenako ndifufuza m'matchalitchi."

Anabwereranso padesiki yake ndipo anakhalira kuyankhula pafoni kwa 1 awa. Akamaimbira munthu winawake ankayamba ndi kunena kuti "halo" m'Chingelezi, kenao ankafunsa za munthu amene akufuna kuyankhula naye ndipo munthuyo akangobwera ankalumikiza Chispanya chokhachokha.

Kenako anabwera mu ofesi yanga.

"Anasamukira ku Chicago. Mufuna ndikupatseni adiresi?"

"Wadziwa bwanji zimenezi?"

"Mnzanga wina yemwe amapemphera naye limodzi ndi amene wandiuza. Anasamukira ku Chicago kumapeto kwa wiki yatha. Ndikhoza kukupezerani adiresi, koma zifuna kanthawi ndithu."

"Ayi, basi. Ndakudziwa kumene angapezeke. Ndakhala ndikupita maulendo angapo ku ofesi ya Drake & Sweeney yomwe ili ku Chicago."

Patatha masiku awiri ndinapita ku Chicago. Koma sindinakwere kumbali ya anthu olemera, first class, ngati mmene ndinkachitira m'mbuyomo. Nditafika ndinadikira panja pa maofesi a Drake & Sweeney kuyambira 7 koloko m'mawa pamene malowa 106, ankalowa m'nyumbayi kuti akayambe ntchito yawo.

Pamene nthawi inkakwana 8:20, Hector Palma anatulukira ndipo ndinamutsatira pamene ankalowa m'nyumba ija. Anatsika chikepi pansanjika ya nambala

51. Panali telefoni pamenepo. Ndinamuimbira Mordecai n'kumuuza mmene zikuyendera.

Kenako ndinaimbira Megan ku Naomi's Women's Center. Ruby anali adakali komweko ndipo ankachita bwino ndithu. Ndinkadziwa kuti Hector Palma sangapitenso kulikonse mpaka ataweruka choncho ndinachezanso kwa nthawi yaitali ndi Megan.

Ukamalowa mumsanjika iliyonse, pankakhala ndandanda wa maina a mapatina a kampaniyi. Ndinasankha dzina limodzi.

"Ndikufuna kuonana ndi Dick Heile," ndinatero mokweza pamene ndinkadutsa desiki ya munthu amene ankaona anthu amene akulowa. Ndinayenda n'kulowa m'kolido.

Hector anali ndi ofesi yakeyake ku Chicago.

"Uli bwanji, Hector?" ndinatero ndikulowa mu ofesiyo. "Zikukuyendera bwanji ku Chicago kuno?"

"Wa-wabwera kudzatani kuno?"

Ndinakhala padesiki ya Hector.

"Posachedwapa tikhala ndi mlandu kukhoti, Hector," ndinatero. "Tisumira kampani ya Drake & Sweeney ndipo iweyo sungauthawe mlandu umenewu."

Ngakhale ndinkalankhula motere, mumtimamu munali mantha okhaokha.

"Ndi ndani amene watsegula mlanduwo."

"Agogo a Lontae Burton. Ndipo kenako titsegulanso mlandu wa anthu ena onse omwe anathamangitsidwa m'nyumba yomwe ankakhala tikawapeza."

Hector anangoima n'kumangondiyang'ana.

"Ukumukumbukira Lontae, si choncho, Hector? Anali mayi wachitsikana yemwe ankalimbana ndi apolisi pa nthawi imene unapita kukathamangitsa anthu aja. Sindikukayikira kuti unachita zimenezo chifukwa choti

unachita kuuzidwa. Unkadziwa ndithu kuti anthu aja anali alendi. Choncho unalemba kapepala kolembedwa deti la 27 January ndipo unaika pepalalo mufailo. Koma Braden Chance anachotsa pepalalo mufailoyo. N'chifukwa chake ndabwera kuno. Ndikufuna kope ya pepala limene linachotsedwalo."

"N'chifukwa chiyani waganiza kuti ineyo ndili ndi kope ya pepalalo?"

"Ndikudziwa kuti ndiwe munthu wozindikira kwambiri, Hector. Unkadziwa kuti kampani ya Drake & Sweeney yathamangitsa anthuwo mopanda chilungamo. Unkadziwa kufunika kwa pepala limene unalembalo. Ndiponso n'kutheka kuti unkadziwa kuti Braden Chance akhoza kulichotsamo mufailo yomwe unaliikayo."

Hector anakhala kaye phe-e. Ndikuganiza kuti sankasangalala kumakhala moyo wobisala ku Chicago. Ankadziwa ndithu kuti anthu aja anathamangitsidwa mopanda chilungamo. Ulendo wapita uja anayesa kundithandiza kudziwa kumene ndingapeze umboni wa zimenezo ndipo ndinkadziwa kuti akhozanso kundithandiza.

"Tikumane 12 koloko pafupi ndi polowera nyumba ino," anatero.

Hector anabweradi pa nthawi yake.

"Ineyo ndili ndi ana 4 ndiye chonde undiiteteze," anatero pamene ankandipatsa invelopu. Ndinamuthokoza, kukwera takisi, kenako n'kutsegula invelopuyo.

Pepala lomwe linali mmenemo linali ndi deti la 27 January. Linalembedwa kuti anthu aja anali alendi ndipo ankalipira 100 dolazi pamwezi ndipo munthu wina dzina lake Johnny ankabewera kudzalandira ndalamazo pa 15 mwezi uliwonse. Mu invelopumu munalinso lisiti losainidwa ndi Johnny. Lisitilo linkasonyeza kuti walandira 100 dolazi ya lendi kwa Lontae Burton pa 15 January.

Umenewu unali umboni wokwanira ndithu. Anthu aja anali alendi ndipo anathamangitsidwa mopanda chilungamo m'nyumba imene ankakhala.

Nditafika kubwalo lokwerera ndege la Chicago O' Hare ndinatumiza kope ya pepala komanso lisiti lija kwa Mordecai kudzera pa njira yotumizira mauthenga ya *fax.*

Kenako ndinakwera ndenge yotsatira n'kubwerera ku Washington. Takisi inanditenga kubwalo lokwerera ndegelo n'kukandisiya ku 14th Street komwe ndinakapeza nkhope ya Mordecai ndi Sofia itagwa. Lieutenant Gasko anali atakhala mu ofesi yanga, akundidikirira.

Pamene ankanditengera kumene kunali galimoto ya apolisi, Sofia anali bize kuimba mafoni mofulumira ndipo ankayankhulanso mofulumira kwambiri, choyamba m'Chingelezi, kenako m'Chispanya. Palibe chomwe Sofia ndi Mordecai akanachita kuti Lieutenant Gasko asanditengere kupolisi monga ankachitira ndi zigawenga zonse. Kampani ya Drake & Sweeney inauza apolisiwo kuti ndaba failo yawo.

11

Linali Lachisanu masana. Ndinkadziwa kuti Mordecai ayesetsa kuchita chilichonse kuti anditulutse pabelo. Koma monga mukudziwira n'zosavuta kuti mzungu achitidwe zachipongwe ndi anthu oipa m'ndende atatsekeredwa ndi zigawenga zouma mitima.

Pamene galimoto yapolisi ija inkayenda, ndinayamba kuganizira za anthu ofunika kwambiri padzikoli omwe anatsekeredwapo m'ndende monga Martin Luther King. Koma kenako ndinayamba kuganizira za makolo anga. Akanangomva zoti mwana wawo watsekeredwa m'ndende zikanawakhudza kwambiri. Anzanga anali atayamba kale kuganiza kuti ndawononga tsogolo langa. Sindinkadziwa kuti Claire akuganiza bwanji zokhudza ine, makamakanso chifukwa choti anali atapeza kale mwamuna wina watsopano.

"Titafika kupolisi, Gasko ananditsogolera ngati galu wosokonekera. Anatenga zonse zomwe zinali m'matumba mwanga ndipo anandiuza kuti ndisaine penapake kuti azisunge. Kenako anandijambula komanso anatenga madindo a zala zanga zam'manja. Apolisi ankangoti balalabalala, koma panali munthu m'modzi yekha yemwenso anali ndi nkhope yoyera ngati yanga, koma munthu ameneyo anali ataledzera.

Kenako ananditsogolera kumene kunali maselo. Ndinachita mantha kwambiri.

“Kodi n’zotheka kundipatsa belo?” ndinafunsa.

“Ndikuganiza kuti loya wako akukonza zochita zimenezo,” anatero Gasko.

Chitseko cha selo chinatsekedwa kumbuyo kwanga. Museloyo munalinso anthu ena 5. Onse anali akuda ndipo anali aang’ono kwa ine. Ndinakhala pansi pasimenti.

Muselo yomwe inali mbali inayo, ndinkatha kuona mzungu woledzera uja yemwe ankangokhalira kukuwa. Amuna amatupi akuluakulu awiri, omwe onse anali akuda, anali akumukankhira kukona kwa seloyo. Ankamumenya mutu.

Maminitsi angapo anadutsa. M’modzi mwa anyamata ndinatsekeredwa nawo aja anabwera pafupi. Ndinadziwiratu kuti sizitha bwino.

“Koma ndiye muli ndi jekete yabwinotu,” anatero akugunda jekete yangayo ndi phazi lake ine nditakhala pansi pasimenti.

“Zikomo kwambiri,” ndinatero, ndikuyesa kumveka ngati ndi zimene ndikutanthauzadi.

Mnyamata ameneyu ayenera anali ndi zaka 18 kapena 19. Anali woonda kwambiri. N’kutheka anali m’gulu la zigawenga zomwe zinakulira m’misewu.

“Nanensotu ndimafuna nditakhala ndi jekete ngati imeneyo,” anatero akundimenya ndi mwendo wake.

“Ndiyetu bwenzi utalimbikira maphunziro m’malo mokhala chigawenga chotha ntchito chamumsewu,” ndinatero mumtima mwanga. “Ukufuna ndikubwereke jeketeyi?” ndinamufunsa. Sindinkafuna zolimbana naye. Ndinkadziwa kuti ndikangotero, anzake 4 aja abwera kudzandipha.

“Sindinamvetsetse, mwati chiyani?”

“Ndanena kuti, ‘Ukufuna ndikubwereke . . . ’”

Anandimenya mutu ndi mwendo wake ndipo ndina-

kuwa chifukwa cha ululu.

"Mchimweneyo wanena kuti amafuna atakhala ndi jekete ngati limenelo," anatero m'modzi mwa anzake aja. "Choncho zingakhale bwino kwambiri mutamupatsa ngati mphatso m'malo mongomubwereka."

Ndinavula jekete yangayo n'kukweza dzanja langa kuti ndimupatse mnyamata anandimenya uja.

"Mukundipatsa ngati mphatso?" anafuna akulandira jeketeyo.

"Mulimonse mmene ukuganiziramo."

Anandimenyanso m'mutu ndi mwendo wake mwamphamvu kwambiri.

"Mukundipatsa ngati mphatso, eti?" anabwerezanso funso lija.

"Inde."

"Zikomo kwambiri mbale wanga."

Nkhope yanga inali itavulala. Simenti ija inkazizira kwambiri. Kodi ndipanga bwanji ndikafuna kupita kutoileti?

"Muli ndi nsapato zabwinotu," anatero mnyamata wina ataimirira pafupi nane. Ndinangovula nsapato zanga n'kumupatsa.

Mordecai anandidutsa pabelo cha m'ma 7 koloko usiku. Analipira ndalama yokwana 10 sauzande dolazi.

Anzanga a ku Drake & Sweeney anali atauza atolankhani kuti ndatsekeredwa m'ndende.

Loya wapatsidwa belo. Kodi anaba? Ndinawerenga mawuwa m'nyuzipepala tsiku lotsatira. Anaika chithunzi changa chomwe anandijambula nditangoyamba kumene ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney. Ankayesa kuchita chilichonse kuti awonongeretu tsogolo langa.

Ndinayamba kudabwa kuti kodi ndi ndani amene akulipira Rafter komanso Arthur Jacobs pa maawazi onse

amene ankathera pa ine. N'kutheka kuti alipo ankawalipira ndithu. Munthu akamagwira ntchito ku Drake & Sweeney ankayenera kupatsidwa ndalama pa 1 awa iliyonse imene wagwira ntchito. Mwina a RiverOaks ndi amene ankawalipira.

Ndinabwereranso kuntchito ku 14th Street ndipo ndinapeza Ruby akugona pakhomo lolowera mu ofesi yathu.

"N'chifukwa chiyani mukugona pamenepa?" ndinafunsa. Sanandiyankhe. Anali atakhumudwa kwambiri. Ndinatsegula chitseko, kupanga khofi, kenako n'kupita kukatenga mabisiketi.

Kenako foni inalira. Anali Megan. Anandiuza kuti Ruby wathawa kumalo othandizira anthu omwe amamwa madiragi kuja.

"Kodi wayambiranso kumwa madiragi?" ndinafunsa Ruby.

"Ayi," anatero akuyang'ana kwina.

"Ndikudziwa kuti wayambiranso. Osamandinamiza ine ayi, Ruby. Ndine mnzako komanso loya wako amene akufuna kukuthandiza kuti uonenso mwana wako. Koma ukayamba kundinamiza, zindivuta kukuthandiza kwake. Ngati ukufuna ndipitirize kukuthandiza, nyamuka ubwererenso ku Naomi's.

"Chabwino."

"Okhe, tiye ndikuperekeze."

"Chabwino."

Anatolanso bisiketi wina. Bisiketi ameneyu anali wanambala 4 ndipo anayamba kumudya.

Pamene tinkabwerera ku Naomi's, anandiuza kuti, "Ndinamva zoti munamangidwa."

"Wadziwa bwanji?"

"Nkhani imafala mofulumira m'misewumu."

Titafika, Megan anatenga Ruby n'kupita naye kumene kunali azimayi ena ndipo anandipempha kuti ndidikire pang'ono kuti andipangire khofi. Kenako anabweranso n'kundiponyera nyuzipepala ya Washington Post.

"Wakumana nazotu, ha?" anatero akumwetulira.

M'nyuzipepalayo munalinso chithunzi changa.

"Ayi, sikuti pali chodetsa nkhawa chimene chinachitika ayi."

"Nkhope yakoyo yatani?" anandifunsa akuloza nkhope yanga.

"Mnyamata wina yemwe ndinatsekeredwa naye limodzi amafuna nsapato zanga. Wazitenga."

Anayang'ana nsapato zanga. Zinali nsapato zakutha za *Nikes*. "Nsapato zake izizi?"

"Inde, ndinsapato zabwino, eti?"

"Anakutsekera kwa nthawi yaitali bwanji?"

"Timaawazi tingapo. Ndaphunzira zambiri. Ndine munthu watsopano."

Anandimwetuliranso, kumwetulira koiwalitsa mavuto. Maso ake anangoti tha pa ine ndipo ndinayang'ana manja ake.

"Palibe chala chomwe chavala mphete," ndinatero mumtima mwanga.

Anali wamtali komanso wochepa thupi. Tsitsi lake linali lalifupi lofiira ndipo linaduliridwa bwino. Maso ake anali abulauni, aakulu komanso ozungulira. Anali maso osangalatsa kuwaona. Anali wokongola kwambiri ndipo ndinadabwa kwambiri kuti bwanji sindinaone kukongola kumeneku ulendo woyamba uja.

Ndinamuuza mbiri yanga. Nayenso anandiuza mbiri yake. Bambo ake anali m'busa patchalitchi china ku Maryland. Bambo akewo ankakonda baseball komanso ankakonda tauni ya Washington. Pamene ankakula, Megan

anaganiza zoyamba kugwira ntchito yothandiza anthu ovutika. Choncho ankagwira ntchito yomwe ankaikonda.

Ndinamuuza zokhudza bambo anawomberedwa uja komanso zimene zinachitika kuti ndiyambe kugwira ntchito yothandiza anthu osowa pokhala.

Pamene ndinkafotokoza zimenezi, ankamvetsera mwatcheru komanso ankandifunsa mafunso ambirimbiri. Kenako anandiuza kuti ndibwerenso kudzadya lanchi. Anandiuza kuti dzuwa likakhala kuti likuwala, tidyera panja. Ndinagwirizana ndi maganizo amenewo. Ndinazindikira kuti chikondi chikhoza kupezeka kulikonse, ngakhale kumalo othandizira azimayi osowa pokhala.

12

Failo yomwe ndinapatsidwa inali yonenepa. Rafter anali atagwira ntchito mwakhama. Imeneyi inali kope ya mlandu womwe Drake & Sweeney anakaupereka kubungwe loona za maloya. Ngakhale analemba chibukhu chonsechi, nkhani yake kuifotokoza m'chiganizo chimodzi inali yakuti: Ndaba failo choncho ndikufunika kulandidwa laisensi yanga ya uloya.

Zimenezi zinali zokhumudwitsa kwambiri. A kampani ya Drake & Sweeney ankafuna kuwononga moyo wanga. Zinali zochititsa mantha kwambiri.

Kungochokera pamene ndinapita kusukulu ya uloya zaka 10 zapitazo, ndinali ndisanaganizireponso zogwira ntchito yamtundu wina. Ndiye nditani laisensi yanga ikalandidwa?

Koma pali chinthu chimodzi chimene a Drake & Sweeney sankachidziwa. Ine ndi Mordecai tinali titangotsala pang'ono kutsegula mlandu wa 4 miliyoni dolazi wokhudza banja la a Burton ndipo tinkayenera kuchita zimenezo tsiku lotsatira 9 koloko m'mawa.

Ndinapita ku ofesi kwa Mordecai.

"Ndiye ndipange bwanji pamenepa?" ndinamufunsa.

Anamwetulira.

Tingotengera chitsanzo chawo. Tiimbe foni ku nyuzipepala ya Washington Post. Kukoleji ndinali ndinaphu-

nzira limodzi ndi Tim Claussen. Ndi m'modzi mwa atolankhani abwino kwambiri m'dziko lino."

Tsiku lotsatira, tinauza Tim Claussen zokhudza mlandu womwe tinkafuna kutsegulira kampani ya Drake & Sweeney.

Nkhani yokhudza banja la a Burton inali itafala kale chifukwa cha zionetsero zinachitika zija komanso kumangidwa kwanga kuja. Ndiye nkhani imene tinkafuna kusumayi inangochititsanso kuti ifalikire kwambiri. Tim Claussen anatifunsa mafunso ambirimbiri omwe tinasangalala kwambiri kupereka mayankho ake.

Nkhani yake inatuluka m'nyuzipepala ya tsiku lotsatira. Kwa kampani yakale kwambiri ngati Drake & Sweeney, nkhaniyi inali chibakera chankhanza kwambiri. Chithunzi cha Arthur Jacobs chinali pafupi ndi chithunzi cha DeVon Hardy. Panalinso zithunzi za Lontae Burton zomwe zinajambulidwa popanda chionetsero chija.

Munthu sankachita kufunika kuwerenga nkhani yonse. Zithunzizo zinkafotokoza nkhani yonse: Chifukwa cha kampani ya Drake & Sweeney, anthu ovutikawo anaphedwa.

Tsiku lotsatira mavuto anayamba kusonkhana ku Drake & Sweeney. A Post Office ankafuna kupanga lendi nyumba aja sanasangalale ndi nkhani zinaoneka m'nyuzipepalazi. Iwo sankafunanso kupitiriza kuchita bizinezi ndi kampani ya RiverOaks. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti kampani ya RiverOaks itsale chimanjamanja. Kenako kampani ya RiverOaks inauza nyuzipepala ya Washington Post kuti samadziwa kuti anthu aja anali alendi. Choncho zinayamba kuonekanso kuti nawonso akhoza kukasuma kukhoti kuti awabwezere ndalama zankhaninkhani zomwe aluza chifukwa cha zimene kampani ya Drake & Sweeney inachita.

Arthur Jacobs anaimbira foni Mordecai ku ofesi kuja. Ankafuna kuti akakumane ndi Mordecai kumaofesi a Drake & Sweeney kuti akakambirane za mlanduwo. Koma ankati ine ndisapite nawo. Mordecai anandimwetulira.

"Akufunatu tikakambirane za nkhaniyi," anatero.

"Mwinadi," ndinatero.

Tsogolo langa linkadalira zimene Mordecai ndi Arthur Jacobs angakakambirane. Usiku umenewo sindinagone. Koma Mordecai ankangomva bwino thupi lonse. Iye anandiuza kuti sankakhulupirira kuti Arthur Jacobs ali ndi zaka pafupifupi 80.

Nkhalambayo inamuuza Mordecai kuti Braden Chance wachotsedwa ntchito. Anamuuzanso kuti Chance ndi munthu yekhayo amene amadziwa zoti anthuwo anali alendi. Zinkaoneka kuti ndi zoona ndithu.

Mordecai anamuonetsa Arthur Jacobs pepala lomwe linachotsedwa mufailo lija komanso lisiti lija.

Nayenso Rafter analipo pa zokambiranazo, komanso maloya ena ndipo kwa nthawi yaitali anthuwa sananenepo chilichonse.

Kenako Arthur Jacobs anapereka maganizo ake. Ankafuna kuti nkhaniyi tikaithetsere pamaso pa jaji. Ankaona kuti kuchita zimenezi kufupikitsa nkhani chifukwa nkhani zonse zitatu: mlandu wa a Burton, nkhani ya kuba failo ija komanso nkhani ya mlandu womwe anakautula kuofesi yoona za maloya. Ananena kuti jaji wake akhala DeOrio, yemwe Mordecai ankanena kuti ndi munthu wachilungamo.

"Ukuganiza bwanji?" Mordecai anandifunsa.

"Inu mukuganiza bwanji?"

"Ndikuona ngati ndi ganizo labwino. Ndikhoza kuimbira Jaji DeOrio n'kukonza nthawi yoti tikakumane."

13

Tinali m’chipinda china limodzi ndi Jaji DeOrio, koma sikuti mmenemu munali mukhoti. Tinali limodzi ndi maloya awiri oimira RiverOaks. Kuchokera ku Drake & Sweeney, panali Arthur Jacobs, Rafter, Nathan Malamud ndi Barry Nuzzo.

N’chifukwa chiyani kunabwera Malamud ndi Nuzzo, omwe sakanayankhula chilichonse chokhudza kampani ya Drake & Sweeney? Ndinamvetsa chifukwa chake. Malamud ndi Nuzzo anapita kuntchito tsiku lotsatira bambo uja atangophedwa. Zikuoneka kuti zomwe zinachitikirazo sizinkawakhudza ngakhale pang’ono. Anali bwinobwino. Ndiye funso linali lakuti, N’chifukwa chiyani ineyo sindinachite zinthu mofanana nawo? Ankafuna kundikola ndi mfundo imeneyo.

Jaji DeOrio anatipatsa moni ndipo kenako anapereka 5 minitsi kwa Mordecai kuti afotokoze dandaulo lake lokhudza banja la a Burton. Koma Mordecai sankafunikira nthawi yonseyi. Iye anafotokoza zonse kwa 2 minitsi yokha basi. Anafotokoza momveka bwino mmene kampani ya Drake & Sweeney inachititsira kuti anthu osalakwa aja athamangitsidwe m’nyumba imene ankakhala zomwe pamapeto pake zinachititsa kuti Lontae Burton ndi ana ake aja amwalire.

Arthur Jacobs ndi amene anayankhula moimira Drake & Sweeney. Iye sanatsutse zimene Mordecai ana-

nena zokhudza Lontae ndi ana ake. Koma ananena kuti mbali ina, vuto linali iwowo.

"Panali malo ambirimbiri omwe akanapita n'kumakakhala," anatero Arthur. "Malo osamalira anthu osowa pokhala anali otsegula. Mwadzulo lakenso anali atagona kutchalitchi komwenso kunali anthu ena osowa pokhala ambirimbiri. N'chifukwa chiyani iyeyo anachokako? Agogo ake ali ndi nyumba. N'chifukwa chiyani agogowo sanaitane mdzukulu wawoyo kuti azimusamalira?"

"Tisanafike kumeneko, n'chiyani chinachititsa kuti ayambe kukhala mumsewu?" Jaji DeOrio anafunsa ndipo ndinangotsala pang'ono kumwetulira.

Arthur ankachitabe zinthu modekha.

"Pa nkhani yothamangitsa anthuyodi ndiye panali vuto," anatero Arthur. "Sikuti tikutsutsana ndi Mr. Green pa nkhani imeneyi. Mfundo imene tikufuna kuti muimvetse ndi yakuti zomwe zinachitika pambuyo poti mayi ndi ana akewo athamangitsidwa m'nyumba yomwe ankakhala, mbali ina linali vuto lawo."

"Mbali mukunenayo inali yaikulu bwanji?" anafunsa Jaji DeOrio.

"Hafu."

"Mwakokomezatu pamenepo."

"Sitikugwirizana ndi mfundo imeneyo, Jaji DeOrio."

"Mr. Green?"

Mordecai anaimirira akupukusa mutu wake mosonyeza ngati zimene zikutuluka pakamwa pa Arthur ndi zoyenera kutuluka pakamwa pa munthu yemwe wangomaliza kumene maphunziro ake a zauloya.

"Anthu amene tikunenawa amakhala oti alibe kulikonse komwe angapite, Mr. Jacobs. Chimenecho n'chifukwa chake amatchedwa anthu osowa pokhala. Inuyo ndi

amene munachititsa kuti banjali lizisowa pokhala. Mwavomera kale apa kuti munachitadi zimenezo ndipo kumene munawathamangitsirako n'kumene anafera. Ngati simukugwirizana ndi zimenezi, tiyeni tikakambirane nkhaniyi pamaso pa bwalo. Kodi mukanenanso zimene mukufotokoza panozi kumeneko? Mukaimirira ndi mfundo zimene muli nazozi anthu akukuyang'anani, Mr. Jacobs? Mukalimba mtima kuuza bwalo kuti, 'Ndi vuto la mayiyo lomwe lachititsa kuti banja lake lonse life?"

Arthur komanso maloya onse oimira Drake & Sweeney anayamba kuoneka kuti akuchita mantha. Iwo sakanalimba mtima kukaimirira m'bwalo lodzaza ndi anthu akuda n'kumanena kuti, mbali ina, linali vuto la Lontae kuti banja lake lonse life.

"Kampani ya Drake & Sweeney yapezeka ndi mlandu wothamangitsa anthu osalakwa m'nyumba yomwe ankakhala," anatero Jaji DeOrio. "Mfundo imeneyi ndi yosatsutsika. Ndikuona kuti si nzeru kuti mukakambire kupititsa nkhaniyi kubwalo kuti mukauze anthu kuti ndi vuto la mayiyo kuti banja lake life."

Mordecai ndi Arthur anakhala pansi. Tinali titawina mlandu wa a Burton popanda kupita kukhoti. Tsopano nthawi inali itafika kuti tikambirane zokhudza kuchuluka kwa ndalama zimene kampani ya Drake & Sweeney inkayenera kupereka kubanjali monga chipukutamisozi. Rafter anaimirira ndipo anafotokoza ndalama zimene ena amakonda kupereka pa milandu yokhudza ana omwe amwalira mopanda chilungamo.

Anawerenga nkhani zokhudza milandu ngati imeneyi, yomwe inachitika m'dziko lonse la United States. Kenako ananena kuti iwowo ndi okonzeka kupereka 50 sauzande dolazi pa mwana aliyense. Kenako anayamba kufotokoza zopanda nzeru. Anayamba kutchula kuchu-

luka kwa ndalama zimene Lontae akanakhala ndi moyo akanamapanga pamwezi zikanakhala kuti akugwira ntchito.

Ndalama imeneyo inali itawonjezeredwa ku ndalama ija ankanena kuti apereka pa mwana aliyense. Zonse pamodzi, ananena kuti apereka 770 sauzande dolazi.

"Basi mwaimira pamenepo, Mr. Rafter?" anafunsa Jaji DeOrio. Iye ankaoneka kuti akuyembekezera kuti ndalamayi iwonjezeredwa.

"Ayi," anatero Rafter.

"Mr. Green."

Mordecai anaimiriranso.

"Ife sitikugwirizana ndi ndalama imene anenayo, Jaji DeOrio. Ndalama imene anena kuti apereka pa mwana aliyenseyi ndi yochepa kwambiri. Ndikudziwa kuchuluka kwa ndalama zimene anthu amenewa angapereke mlanduwu utakaweruzidwa pamaso pa bwalo n'kulola kuti anthu amumzinda wa Washington anene kuchuluka kwa ndalama yoti apereke. Sindikukayikira kuti ndalama imene anenayi singanunkhe kanthu ngati titaiyerekezera ndi imene anthu angawauze kuti apereke kukhoti. N'zoona kuti anawo anali akuda komanso osowa pokhala. Kodi Mr. Rafter, muli ndi mwana yemwe amaphunzira kusukulu yolipira, eti? Zitachitika kuti mwana ameneyo waona imfa yopanda chilungamo, kodi mungalandire munthu atakuuzani kuti akupatsani ndalama zimene mwanena zija?"

Rafter anazyolikira pansi ndipo sanayankhe chilichonse.

"Ngati sakufuna, ife titengera mlandu umenewu kukhoti ndipo sindikukayikira kuti pamapeto pake akauzidwa kuti apereke 1 miliyoni kwa mwana aliyense wa m'banja la a Burton. Ndalama imeneyi ndi imene anthu amalipira zikachitika kuti achotsa moyo wa mwana

wamng'ono m'masukulu odula a ku Virginia kapena ku Maryland."

Maloya aja anayang'anizana. Onse anali ndi ana m'masukulu odula a ku Virginia kapena ku Maryland. Kenako Mordecai anafotokoza zokhudza zimene zinachitika banjali litangotsala pang'ono kufa monga mmene anachitira ku Capitol Hill kuja. Anali ndi luso lodziwa kufotokoza nkhani ndipo nkhani imene ankafotokozayi inalinso nkhani yochititsa chidwi ndi kale.

Mawu ake ankati akakwera, kenako ankatsika atadzaza ndi mkwiyo. Pomaliza analoza maloya a Drake & Sweeney akuyankhula mowagwira mawu:

"Anthu amene akukhala m'chinyumba chimene chija anangolowamo," anatero Mordecai mokweza kwambiri. "Si anthu alendi iyayi choncho pitani mukawathamangitsemo!"

Pomaliza anauza maloya a Drake & Sweeney kuti apereke 4 miliyoni dolazi. Palibe anawiringula mtengo umenewu pamene ankamaliza kuyankhula. Jaji DeOrio analemba manotsi ake. Nkhani yomwe inagwa m'bwalo tsopano inali ya failo ija.

"Kodi watenga failoyo?" anandifunsa Jaji DeOrio.

"Inde."

"N'zotheka kundipatsa?"

"Inde."

Mordecai anapereka failoyo kwa Jaji DeOrio ndipo tinadikira kwa 10 minitsi pamene jajiyo ankawerenga failoyo. Atamaliza ananena kuti, "Failo mumafuna ija yapezeka, Mr. Jacobs. Ndikukhulupirira kuti munakasuma kukhoti zokhudza kubedwa kwa failo imeneyi. Ndiye mutani nayo nkhani imeneyo tsopano?"

"Ngati titamvana pa mlandu wa a Burton, tikukutsimikizirani kuti titsekanso mlandu womwe Mr. Brock

anapalamula, mlandu wakuba failo yathu.”

“Mr. Brock? Mukugwirizana ndi zimenezo?”

“Inde! Zili bwino ndithu.”

“Nkhani yomaliza ndi yokhudza mlandu womwe unakaperekedwa ku bungwe loona za maloya lopempha kuti Michael Brock alandidwe laisensi. Muli ndi mawu alionse Mr. Jacobs?”

Arthur anaimiriranso. Iye anafotokoza kuti si zoyenera kuti loya abe failo kukampani yomwe akugwira ntchito. Zikuoneka kuti ankayankhula mokakamizika moti posakhalitsa anakhala pansi. Ndiye popeza ndinkagwira ntchito kukampani yawo ndipo ndinali nditawaipitira mbiri, anapitirizabe kuikoka nkhaniyi. Ananena kuti mlandu womwe akapereka kubungwe loona za maloyowo suimitsidwa.

Ananena kuti sine munthu woipa, choncho athetsa mlandu wakuba failo uja. Komabe popeza ndinali loya wabwino kwambiri, nsanje inawachititsa kuti apitirize kukoka mlandu womwe anakatula kubungwe loona zamaloya uja.

Maloya ochokera ku RiverOaks sanayankhule kanthu. Koma zinali zoonekeratu kuti anagwirizana ndi zimene tinamanga pamsonkhanowu. Failo yomwe ndinatenga ija inali ya munthu amene ankamuimira. Choncho Arthur anayankhula zokhutiritsa kwambiri moti ndinagwirizana ndi zimene ananena.

“Mr. Brock?” anatero Jaji DeOrio. “Muli ndi mawu pa nkhani imeneyi?”

Sindinakonzekere kuti ndiyankhula pa nthawiyi, koma sindinkaopa kunena mmene ndinkamvera. Maso anga anakumana ndi a Arthur ndipo ndinanena kuti, “Mr. Jacobs, ndinu munthu amene ndakakhala ndikumupatsa ulemu waukulu, ndipo ndimakupatsanibe ulemu. Ndinala-

kwitsadi kutenga failoyi ndipo ndikupepeza chifukwa cha zimenezi. Chomwe chinachititsa kuti ndituluke nayo kunja ndi choti ndimafufuza nkhani yoyambirira ija ndipo cholinga changa chinali choti ndikamaliza ndikaibwezeretse pamene ndinaitenga. Koma zimenezi sizikutanthauza kuti mlanduwu ndikuukana. Ndikupepesa kwambiri kwa inuyo, ku Drake & Sweeney komanso kukampani yomwe mwakhala mukuiimira pamilandu ya RiverOaks."

Mordecai anandiuza kuti ankadziwa kuti maloya a Drake & Sweeney agwirizana ndi ganizo limene ankafuna kupereka komalizira. Mitima ya tonse inali itakhazikika tsopano.

Mordecai ananena kuti kampani ya Drake & Sweeney ilipire anthu onse omwe anathamangitsidwa mopanda chilungamo m'chinyumba chija. Anati aliyense apatsidwe 25 sauzand ndipo zimenezi zichitike anthuwo akangopezeka. Ananena kuti pa mlandu wa banja la a Burton uja, kampaniyi ipereke 3 miliyoni dolazi ndipo ndalamayi iperekedwe pang'onopangono, 300 sauzand dolazi chaka chilichonse mpaka idzathe. Pambuyo pokambirana zinanso zambirimbiri, tinagwirizana kuti ndilandidwe laisensi yanga kwa miyezi 9 yokha basi.

14

M’mawa wa Lachisanu lotsatira ndinkasangalala kuthandiza anthu osowa pokhala ku 14th Street Law Center, ngakhale kuti chifukwa cha kulandidwa laisensi ija ndinkangothandiza ntchito zina. Mwadzidzidzi Arthur Jacobs anatulukira. Ndinamupatsa moni mosangalala, koma sindinkadziwa kuti wabwera kudzatani.

Nditamuuza kuti pali khofi, ananena kuti ayi. Ankangofuna kuti tiyankhulane.

Arthur ananena kuti mawiki angapo apitawa anali nthawi yovuta kwambiri pa moyo wake kungochokera pamene anayamba ntchito ya uloya zaka 56 zapitazo. Zinthu zinali zitabwereranso m’chimake ku Drake & Sweeney, koma anavomereza kuti akumavutikabe kugona.

Iye ankadziimba mlandu chifukwa cha imfa ya banja la a Burton ndipo palibe chimene chinkamuthandiza kuti aiwale nkhani imeneyi.

Komanso ananena kuti watopa ndi kuthamangitsa ndalama. Zimenezi zinandidabwitsa kwambiri moti chifukwa chosowa chonena ndinkangomvetsera. Arthur ankavutika mumtima ndipo ndinamumvera chisoni kwambiri.

Anafunsa zokhudza ofesi yathuyo komanso kuti timagwira ntchito motani. Anafunsa kuti ofesiya yakhalapo kwa nthawi yaitali bwanji, ndi anthu angati amene amagwira ntchito pa ofesiyo komanso kuti timapeza bwanji ndalama.

Zimenezi zinandipatsa mwayi womuuza zimene ndikufuna kuchita. Ndinamuuza kuti chifukwa choti ndinalibe laisensi, ndizigwira yongolangiza anthu pa nkhani zamilandu. Ndinkafuna kupempha makampani akuluakulu a maloya a mu Washington kuti andithandize pa ntchito imeneyi. Maloya ongodzipereka amenewa anali oti azindithandiza maola angapo pawiki ndipo ndiziwauza zoti achite. Ndinkaona kuti tikhoza kuthandiza anthu osowa pokhala ambirimbiri mwanjira imeneyi.

Arthur anasangalala ndi ganizo limeneli. Pamene tinkakambirana pulogalamu ndinkaganizirayi inakula kwambiri. Arthur anandiuza kuti azitumiza maloya onse 400 omwe ankagwira ntchito pa ofesi ya ku Washington kuti azithandiza nawo pa ntchitoyi kwa maola angapo pawiki.

"Kodi maloya 400 akuchulukira, eti?" anafunsa Arthur.

"Ayi," ndinatero. "Koma ndifunika thandizo la winawake wochokera ku Drake & Sweeney. Pali munthu amene ndikuona kuti angandithandize. Munthu ameneyo ali ku ofesi ya ku Chicago. Koma ndi kudziwa kuti mukhoza kumuuza kuti abwererenso kuno."

Monga mmene ndinkaganizira, Arthur sankadziwa chilichonse chokhudza Hector Palma komanso mmene anandithandizira kuti ndipeze failo ya RiverOaks ija. Arthur anandiuza kuti Hector abwerera ku ofesi ya ku Washington mwezi usanathe ndipo azidzandithandiza ntchito ndimanena ija.

Arthur anakhala mu ofesi yanga kwa 2 awazi. Nkhope yake inali yosangalalako pamene ankachoka. Tsopano anali ndi cholinga pa moyo wake. Ndinamuperekeza pamene anaimitsa galimoto yake, kenako ndinathamangira ku ofesi ya Mordecai n'kukamuuza nkhani

yosangalatsa ija. Tsopano zinali zotheka kuthandiza anthu osowa pokhala ochuluka kwambiri mmene tingathere.

Ankolo a Megan anali ndi nyumba pafupi ndi Fenwick Island, m'mbali mwenimweni mwa nyanja. Amenewa anali malo abwino kwambiri kukapuma kumapeto kwa wiki.

Tinachoka ku Washington Lachisanu masana. Ine ndi amene ndinkayendetsa ndipo Megan ankandiuza kodi ndilowere. Ndipo Ruby anali atakhala pampando wakumbuyo, akudya mabisiketi, akusangalala kuti akupita kunyanja. Megan anandiuza momveka bwino kuti m'nyumba ya ankolo akewo muli zipinda zitatu ndipo aliyense akagona chipinda chake.

Loweruka kunagwa mvula. Ine ndi Megan tinakhala limodzi pampando waukulu n'kumaonerera mvulayo ikugwa kudzera pawindo.

"Kodi Ruby ali kuti?" ndinafunsa.

"Akuonera TV. Ukuganiza chiyani?" anafunsa chapansipansi.

Masiku 32 apitawo ndinali pabanja munthune, ndinkakhala yosiyana ndi imene ndinkakhala komanso ndinkagwira ntchito yosiyana ndi imene ndinkagwira. Pa nthawiyo sindinkadziwa chilichonse za mkazi yemwe anatsamiritsa mutu wake paphewa langayu. Koma moyo umasinthadi osati pang'ono. Ndani akanaganiza kuti moyo wanga ungasinthe chonchi m'mwezi umodzi wokha?

"Ndikuganizira zokhudza mmene moyo wanga wasinthira," ndinatero.

Tonse tinamwetulira.

Mukhoza kupeza mabuku ena kwaulere pa linki iyi: Lula Pensulo